CBM Remembers EC Legend GEORGE EVANS!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 87
Nov 2001

Now a Movie...
Detectives, Inc.

JOLTING *TALES OF* TENSION *IN THE* EC TRADITION!

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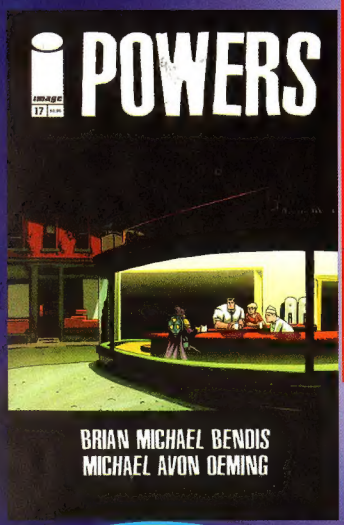

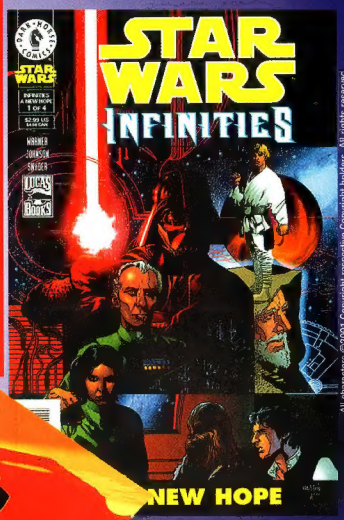

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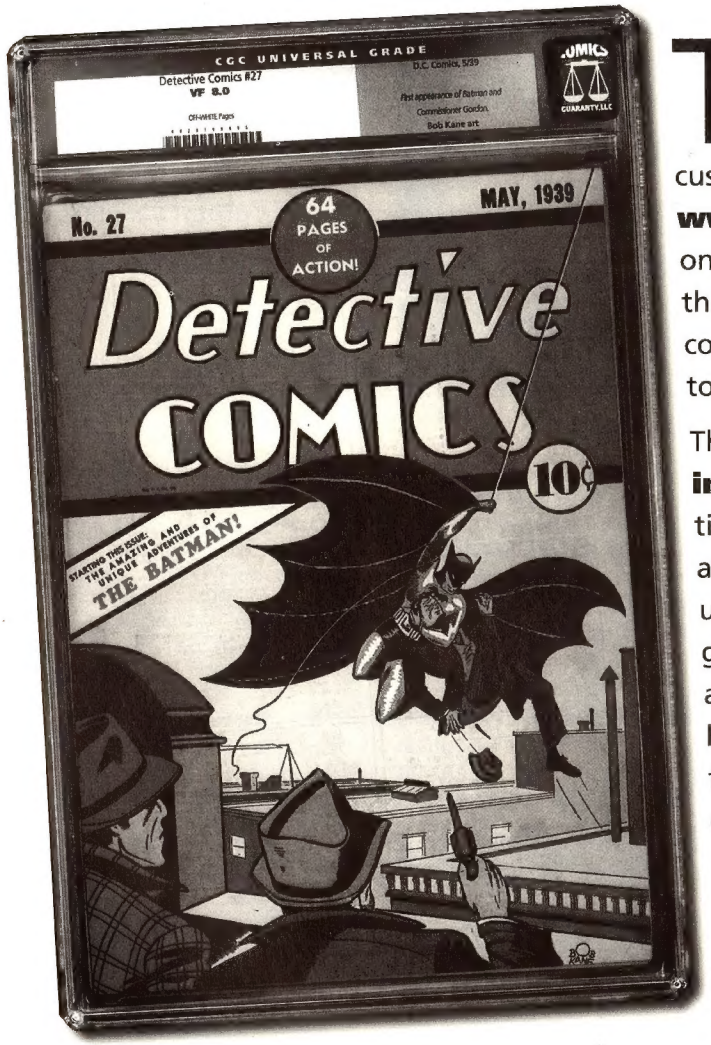

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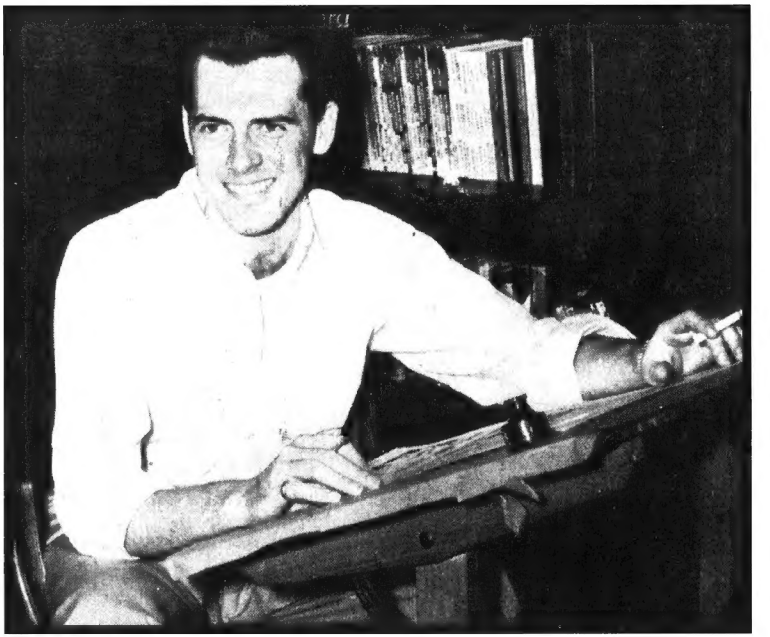


Johnny Craig

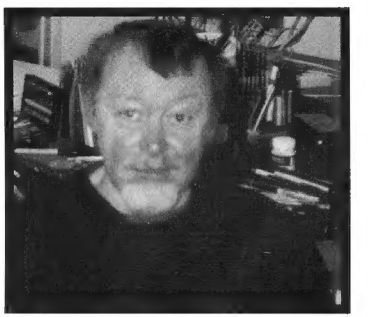
Comics legend Johnny Craig passed away in September at the age of 75. Born in Pleasantville, NY on April 25, 1926, Craig studied art at the Art Students League in New York City, and at the age of 17, assisted Harry Lampert and Sheldon Mayer at the All-American comics group.

In 1947, after stints in both the Merchant Marines and the U.S. Army, Craig signed on with EC Comics. His first work was on *Modern Love* and *A Moon, A Girl...Romance*, but soon he moved to doing most of the covers and lead stories for *Vault of Horror*. Craig not only drew, but also scripted most of his own stories. With an uncluttered, clean style, he also worked as artist, writer and editor of *Vault of Horror* and *Extra!*. After leaving EC, Craig became an art director for a leading advertising agency in Pennsylvania, illustrated titles for DC and Marvel and contributed to Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* titles under the pseudonym Jay Taycee.

In *Comic Book Marketplace* #91 we will take a deeper look at the life, work and legacy of Johnny Craig.

Gray Morrow

Gray Morrow (born Dwight Graydon Morrow, 1934) passed away at his home in central Pennsylvania during the day on Tuesday, November 6th. Although he had suffered with health problems the last few years, his death was unexpected. See *CBM* #84 for a recent interview with this master illustrator.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Some Heroes Have to Die

One of the naturally sweetest guys I have met through my 35+ years of collecting is my old pal Don Lineberger of Valdosta, Georgia. When I started to complete my EC collection in the mid-1960s, Don and I exchanged letters and traded EC comics. I soon found that we shared another love...for bluegrass music. At that time I was playing guitar in a small bluegrass band, and Don was playing five-string banjo in professional groups, including with the King, Bill Monroe. The first time I met Don face-to-face was backstage at the Grand Old Opry, in the historic Ryman Auditorium in downtown Nashville.

As the years rolled by, Don and I have always kept in touch, and lately most of the calls I get from Don are about deaths in the family. Every time a well-known musician would pass away, Don would call to tell me about it, and he'd say "Russ, they're droppin' like flies!" Now every time he calls I wonder..."Who died now?"

My greatest musical hero was (and is) the late Chet Atkins, who passed away this last June. I met Chet back in the very early 1960s and visited him in Nashville many times. He has been in my house in West Plains. He was such a lovely man, gentle-hearted, and so full of natural musical talent, it was almost scary. Don's greatest hero was Mr. Bill Monroe, the Father of Bluegrass.

We are in a period of time now when our EC heroes are passing on. The great Wally Wood was first to go, and he died much too young. In the past ten years we have lost Bill Gaines, whose fatherly presence guided EC through its glory years, the master of horror artists, Graham Ingels, editor/artist Harvey Kurtzman, goofy, lovable Roy Krenkel, and Reed Crandall. More recently, Joe Orlando, Jerry DeFuccio, George Evans and Johnny Craig have joined that group. There are not too many of them left!

So as I write this, just before Thanksgiving, let's all pause a moment in honor of these wonderful people who enriched our lives so much, and let's agree to try to keep their work alive for the benefit of all future comics fans.

We will not see their likes again, and our world is poorer for having lost them, but so much richer because they did what they did while they were here.

Chet Atkins with Russ Cochran, 1962, in Nashville's Studio B

Russ

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Shock of the New

I'm very pleased that you've resumed publishing *CBM*.. It was great to see it back on sale. I have many positive things to say about the magazine, but I would like to focus on one specific complaint. Please, please, please focus on items from Platinum-Bronze age. I cannot begin to describe my disappointment when I saw articles on the newer books, statues, etc. If I want to read about the aforementioned items, I would buy *Wizard*. Please keep the new stuff out of the magazine and I assure you I will remain loyal to your publication. Continue to publish articles on newer items, and I assure you I will spend my money elsewhere.

Yoram Matzkin, ytb83@hotmail.com

Thanks for caring enough to write, Yoram. The main focus of CBM *will continue to be comic books from the Platinum through Bronze ages, and articles on these will still occupy most of the pages of each issue. But there is a bigger picture. Our reviews of new books about Plastic Man, about Hal Foster, etc, will shed new light on these Platinum and Golden Age features. These are "new books" but they pertain to our area of interest. Collectable statues are a fairly recent trend, once again, many of them pertain to characters like Captain America, The Spirit, etc, and I can only assume that collectors who collect comics in this period are going to want to know about these new statues.*

My goal is to give CBM *readers a balanced mixture which will include all these areas, while concentrating on the comic books we all collect.*

Russ Cochran

Too True

Very excited to receive *CBM*, issue #80. Imagine—eighty issues! It's just wonderful; and very fitting to honor one of the greatest of all publishers.

It's a terrible irony that the publisher most affected by Dr. Frederick Wertham's anti-comic campaign should have been EC Comics. Yes, EC had extremely graphic horror, sex, and violence in its stories. They were, after all, for adults, not for children. But, as many have pointed out, not only did EC feature the finest writers and artists of its day, but EC stories also had the highest moral values of the time. In EC stories, wickedness, betrayal, greed and bigotry were punished, not glorified. EC took on tough subjects like racial hatred, religious intolerance, and even fear of the disabled at a time when very little was being written about these subjects.

It is true that EC characters were often corrupt and ugly. However, they were not there to be admired, but to be learned from. Sex was shown as a potentially terrible affliction, driving men and women to crime in a murderous resolution of love's eternal triangle. Similarly, greed for power or money was shown as a disease from which virtually no person was immune. EC's characters were constantly being put to the test of their moral integrity. They were subjected to every sort of temptation and enticement. They lived in a scary world, in which no one could feel secure or safe. Their aberration from the righteous path was a chilling lesson for us readers.

Comics often come under criticism by those who think that every comic should be an example of heroic fiction. Super-hero stories, westerns, war comics, and many other genres certainly fulfill this role. Their characters are meant to be paragons of virtue. It is entirely appropriate for children to admire Superman, Wonder Woman, The Lone Ranger, or Sergeant Rock; and even to want to grow up to be like them. But clearly, other characters, not just villains, are not meant to serve as models of behavior. Does anyone seriously want children to emulate Daffy Duck, Jughead, or (God forbid) Bugs Bunny? Comical characters are meant to exemplify our foibles and failings—that's why they're funny. They aren't meant to be admired and imitated.

The same is true of the grotesque characters and anti-heroes that populate EC Comics. In this respect, EC Comics were similar to pulp writing of the 1930s and 40s and to film noir of the 40s and 50s. After EC was drummed out of business, that dark tradition was continued in the new medium of television in such shows as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*. Again, no serious person would think these shows were for children.

Wertham's thesis that comics contributed to juvenile delinquency was proven categorically wrong. With the adoption of the Comics Code Authority, came everything Wertham had called for. Comic publishers expunged horror, sex, violence, and sensationalism. Comics became bland, more conventional, more reflective of middle class values, perhaps more intellectual(!), and certainly more boring. Did juvenile delinquency decline as a result of all these putatively desirable changes? Of course, it did not. It continued to increase for the next several decades.

Every new medium is blamed for corrupting the young. The same charges brought against the comics were

likewise levied against novels, vaudeville, jazz, movies, radio, and television. In our generation we've heard the same accusations made against rock and roll, and today, (gangsta) rap. There's a lot to criticize in all these media. That's part of what makes them fun. But are we so arrogant that we can't we tell the difference between real evil and that which is simply unpleasant, repulsive, or aesthetically distasteful to us? Of course not. Congratulations on a great accomplishment.

Collin Alscher, California

CBM *#80 (the big EC issue) is still available as a back issue, as are several others. Contact us here at the West Plains office for more info.*

Ed R.

Reactions

First, I must tell you how great it is to have *CBM* back on the racks and your lifetime's knowledge of comics makes you a perfect choice as new editor. I've been following *CBM* enthusiastically since its revival with No.22 and wanted to give you my reactions to your debut issue, including some constructive criticism and some ideas for the future issues.

I loved the variety of contents and the mix of features, but my main misgivings were about the poor graphic design and missing captions. Do you have a graphic designer on board? I got the lovely Gray Morrow cover and it had no tasteful cover lines on it at all to let buyers know about some of the goodies inside—surely useful to tempt new readers?

Now, I wanted to respond very positively to your idea to start covering collecting original art, especially as the high print and paper quality of *CBM* will allow you to reproduce original art to a very high standard. I'd also really welcome coverage of the classic comic strips. I'd like to suggest that a wonderful special focus could be on Platinum Age Comics, now separately listed in *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. Some of those front covers of Cupples & leon and other big landscape hardback albums cry out to be seen in color. Other suggestions: for interviews: Jerry Grandinetti, John & Sal Buscema, Bob Lubbers, Robert Kanigher, Joe Gill, and how about tributes to the recently departed Hank Ketchum and George Evans?

Tasteful cover lines?

I also hope someday to see some coverage of underground comix. It astounds me that these highly collectable and culturally significant titles continue to be excluded from *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. I know their adult, taboo-breaking subject matter can upset some people, but they are obviously going to skyrocket in value and critical acclaim. If not a special section or issue, maybe a regular column? You might start with the connection between EC and the underground, all those EC pastiche covers, etc., to help put it in context? And maybe next year's *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* can finally add a small specific section on key undergrounds.

Finally, one regular column I'd welcome would be reviews of the best new books of classic comics history and comic art. Just this week, my trusty store Gosh, opposite the British Museum here in London, got in the latest *Glamour*, a spectacular celebration of the career of Bob Lubbers, the exhaustive *Warren Companion*, Donald Phelps' *Reading the*

Funnies and the *John Buscema Sketchbook*. And then there is the huge *Comic Book Nation* book from John Hopkins University Press, and other tomes like this from lofty academic presses. *CBM* needs to be on top of this activity. If you need someone to write about this sort of thing, I might be your man (I've been reviewing for the British comics magazine *Comics Forum*, among others).

It is great to have *CBM* back and to have you steering it into the new millennium. Let me wish you every success with future issues, and I hope I might hear back from you, if I can help in any way.

Paul Gravett, via e-mail

Thanks for your letter, Paul. It is impossible to ignore letters like yours, so full of helpful suggestions. I know I'm a minimalist when it comes to lots of cover blurbs, which I feel are much more appropriate for People *magazine than for* CBM. *I have probably been too severe in reducing them on* CBM *covers, but I love to see the cover art without blurbs all over it. I'll get better at that. And thanks for your on-the-money review of the Jack Cole-Plastic Man book which appeared in* CBM *#86.*

Russ

A Life with Comics

A belated thanks for taking over the reins of *CBM*. Experienced horsemen aren't that easy to come by. Count me in for another dozen issues.

Hope you can manage to keep up a good mix of the true Golden Age with all that came later.

Not many of us left that can remember picking up both the first issues of *Life* and *Detective Comics* off the newsstand. I still have the *Life*. Seemed to have misplaced the *Detective*.

Anyway, remind me again when it's time for renewal.

"Uncle" Gene Kousek, Arkansas

In Issue 85...

I have two comments regarding articles in issue #85 of *Comic Book Marketplace*.

First, one point should be clarified in Jon McClure's article, "Solving The Whitman Mystery." He asserts that Gold Key's price changes did not occur smoothly; i.e., during the same month on all titles.

In fact, Gold Key did change the price on all titles during the same month. But the seeming discrepancy occurs due to the fact that Gold Key cover-dated quarterly titles three months beyond the on-sale month while cover-dating monthly and bi-monthly titles only two months beyond the on-sale month.

In the example Jon used in his article, *Jungle Twins* #10 (July 1974), a quarterly title, went on sale during April 1974 and was priced at 20 cents as were all other Gold Key titles which went on sale that month. *Scooby Doo* #26 (July 1974), a monthly (with some months excepted) title, went on sale during May 1974, the first month of 25 cents-priced Gold Key titles.

My second comment has to do with Michelle Nolan's article, "Funny Animal Fun and Frolics." One important point which Michelle neglected to make and which has always amazed me about the Dell covers (as well as later Gold Key and Whitman covers) is the fact that all of these clever covers were done with absolutely no word balloons!

Think of how hard it must have been to convey an idea without using such balloons, a technique eventually used by most of their contemporaries. But, because of this, the Dell covers look a lot less cluttered than do the covers produced by other publishers.

After Dell began producing their own comics instead of using material produced by Western Printing & Lithographing Co. (later named Western Publishing Co.), they, too, began putting balloons on the covers.

But no Western-produced comic ever had word balloons except for a very few notable exceptions. A few *Francis, The Talking Mule* issues did have covers with word balloons (hey, the *mule talked*) and one 1971 *Bugs Bunny* Gold Key issue reprinted a cover previously used on a Dell comic, but added a balloon with Bugs saying "What's Up, Doc," his trademark line.

John Fishel, PA

Stuttering start

I am a long-time subscriber to *Comic Book Marketplace*. It was by far my favorite magazine. I was very sorry to hear that Gary Carter left *CBM*, but I was encouraged to see that it would continue to be published. I received an email from you on March 19, 2001, announcing that "MONTHLY PUBLICATION" would resume in July. It is now November 8, 2001, and I have received all of TWO ISSUES, one of which was basically the last issue Gary Carter prepared before he left. Is this what you call monthly publication?

One of the nice things about the old *CBM*, was how professionally it was run. I could generally count on a beautiful, new magazine every four weeks. Occasionally it may be a week or so late, but usually it managed to make it to my home every four weeks. In my opinion, this is very important for the future of the magazine.

I have great respect for the fine quality of the publications that Russ Cochran has produced. However, having pre-ordered many items from him in the past, I have severe doubts as to Mr. Cochran's ability to meet a regular deadline. I'm a huge fan of *CBM*, and want it to

survive. Unfortunately, I don't believe it will unless someone can ensure regular monthly publication. I would like to hear your thoughts on this matter.

Tom Martin via e-mail

Your point is well taken, Tom. We are striving to get CBM *on a solid monthly schedule, and so far our problems have been mostly getting everyone coordinated. We get articles directly in some cases, and in some cases we get them from other sources. Sometimes we get the articles on time and not the illustrations for the article. That happened in #87 on the continuation of the George Perez interview. Not getting the illustrations on time gives me a choice between running the article or interview without illos, or being late with the issue, or postponing the article to a future issue. I am slowly learning what to do in these situations.*

Then, there are things like the events of September 11, which none of us expected, which lead to pieces like the Jim Steranko interview on that subject, that need to be worked into the schedule as quickly as possible because of being timely. So I have been straddling the fence in the first few issues of CBM, *trying to figure these problems out. As we move forward, I promise you that things will get smoother and that we will ultimately achieve our goal of being on time every month with* CBM.

Until we get to that point, keep being patient. Rest assured that we are trying very hard to maintain the standard that Gary Carter set for us, and at the same time bring a new look and feeling to the magazine. Letters like yours are very helpful in getting us on the right track.

Russ

Chain letter

In the CBM 86 letter column, Collin Alsche asks about an ACG story called "The Endless Chain." The Grand Comics Database lists a story with that title in *Adventures Into the Unknown* #94, the March 1968 issue.

These days, GCD is my first recourse when I'm trying to identify uncredited reprints and so on. In my opinion, anyone with Internet access should bookmark **http://www.comics.org**!

Denys Howard, via e-mail

Need new blood

I enjoyed most of Dougie Sulipa's (Comic World) erudite market report in CBM 86 but disagreed when he wrote, "It is entirely probable that the back issue market would remain STRONG, even without the existence of new product."

Without new comics attracting a younger generation of collectors, who are the buyers of today's CGC graded comics and other back issues going to sell them to two to five years from now? Teens are already spending most of their discretionary income on Internet access, Play Station 2 and dvd/video rentals, instead of comics.

When pulps stopped being published, the back issue market stagnated for decades from the 1960s to 1980s. That is why pulp retail prices are comparatively low now compared to Golden Age comics. I believe the last pulp price guide came out around 1955 before the resurgence of interest in spicy and hero pulp covers the last six years.

Were the back issue prices strong for cancelled lines like ECs or Fawcett's Whiz/Capt. Marvel? No. They were depressed for decades & continue to be low compared to Timely/Atlas or National/DC hero comic characters that were revitalized during the Silver & Bronze Ages.

CBM is better than ever now. I love the extra articles about comic book or strip original art/paintings. The long text interviews of Marvel/DC stalwarts such as George Perez are fine by me. I now look forward to each new CBM monthly.

Would not mind seeing an interview with new Faux-zetta artist/painter Mike Hoffman and the use of triangles in the design/layout of his illos.

A. Chao, via e-mail

To the Editor:

In my article on original comic art in *CBM* #85, I said, "All-Star Auctions still offers quite a bit of original art, but most of their sales seem to have migrated onto eBay and they must now be considered under that umbrella."

In saying this, I only meant that All-Star has taken full advantage of the eBay phenomenon and seems to have done quite well for themselves in that arena. Also that their auctions are frequent on the eBay site. They have obviously taken a different track than that of, say, Christie's or Sotheby's who only sell work via their own sites (or partnership sites like the former Amazon/Sotheby's alliance).

If I made a misstatement, it was only because I used the evidence before me and it was in the obvious absence of any total sales data from All-Star. My apologies if I ruffled any feathers. Sincerely,

Chris Boyko, New York

(All-Star Auctions is one of the leading sellers of original comic art and other rare collectibles. CBM *regrets the error and apologizes for any problems which Mr. Boyko's statement might have caused.)*

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HORROR HOSTS!

by Pat Calhoun

Of all comics genres the one most
Likely to have tales told by hosts
Is that of werewolves, vampires, and ghosts;
In short it's horror comics that boast
Such boon companions—to them, this toast...

There are several reasons why an outside narrator to introduce and provide closing commentary on stories was used mostly by horror-fantasy comics. Firstly, the congenial hosts provided contrast to the creepiness of the yarns themselves. Secondly, the genre lent itself to the creation of charming caricatures; so often these characters were done in a much lighter vein than the material they presented. Thirdly, there was probably some borrowing of these "framing" figures from the old radio shows—a direct source of inspiration. Fourthly, there were more horror/fantasy short story comics than any other kind. And since EC's horror comics were such trend-setters, there were many imitations of The Old Witch, and the Vault Keeper and Crypt Keeper. Since EC's GhouLunatics have gotten some good air-time (literally in the Crypt Keeper's case) let's look at a few of the other top horror hosts from the early 1950s.

Fawcett's *This Magazine Is Haunted* had prologues and epilogues provided by the somber skull-faced top-hatted Doctor Death. This elegantly macabre host was the creation of Shelly Moldoff, who drew the covers and one of the yarns inside for the first thirteen issues. Shelly had packaged a horror comic for Bill Gaines to use at EC back when all they offered was western, romance, crime, and humor titles; but, purportedly, Gaines appropriated the concept.

This Magazine Is Haunted #5 (Jun 1952) may not feature the most dynamic cover of Shelly's run, but it's a solid spooker nonetheless. The three yarns inside are all top notch. "The Slithering Horror of Skontong Swamp" is superb—a quite nicely-wrought narrative shifted into overdrive by fabulous George Evans art. A prison inmate escapes from death row while walking the last mile, but has to contend with the supernatural spawn of Skontong Swamp. He manages to elude their slimy clutches; they pursue and their clammy hands catch up with him again and again. He allows himself to be recaptured by the police and sits gleefully in the electric chair, hoping that his nightmare will soon be over. Of course it isn't. Evans paces the 11-pager to perfection.

"The Ghost of Fanciful Hawkins" is a tale of a lovable but somewhat ludicrous hick whom the local bullies are always teasing about his size-15 shoes. After the prettiest girl in town falls for him, the meanest bully attacks Hawkins, who falls into the river and drowns. Thereafter the murderer always hears a pair of big squishy

THIS MAGAZINE IS HAUNTED
JUNE
NO. 5
10¢
FASTEN YOUR HAND ACROSS YOUR MOUTH TO HOLD BACK THE SCREAM WHEN YOU READ...
THE SLITHERING HORROR OF SKONTONG SWAMP!
DOCTOR DEATH

This Magazine Is Haunted #5 (Jun 1952): Doctor Death dispenses some free advice as a cover teaser; "Fasten your hand across your mouth to hold back the scream when you read 'The Slithering Horror of Skontong Swamp'!"

shoes stalking him, and the ghost eventually maneuvers him to that same spot on the riverbank where he meets the same watery fate. There's a marvelous framing sequence at the end (in addition to Dr. D's obligatory appearances) that gives the story depth. It has ten terrific pages ably drawn by veteran artist Bob Powell.

"The Last Man" is a pretty good eight-page finale about four carnies who spend the night in a haunted house. While not as spectacular as the previous two tales, it still satisfies.

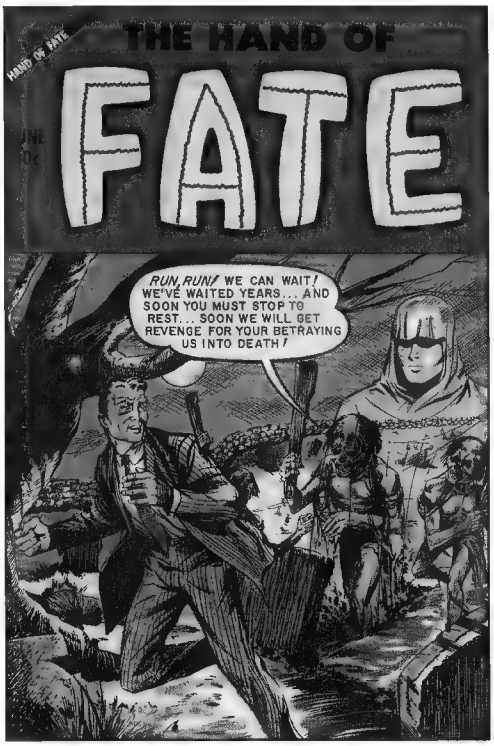
Ace may have produced grade-B horror comics, but in *Hand of Fate* they had an effective host who progressed from last-panel moralizing in earlier issues to a more ubiquitous presence at the end of the title's run. The white-robed and hooded Fate seemed to suffer as he charted souls on the downward paths of evil , sometimes even issuing warnings to the hapless Hell-bound victims. Fate evolved from "the Unknown," a similar character who'd been hosting weirdies in Ace mags since 1947. *Hand of Fate* #23 (Jun 1954) leads off with a yarn illustrated by Ace's star artist, Lou Cameron, whose work provides the best reason for collecting their four (otherwise) lackluster fantasy titles.

"He Who Robs the Dead" is a standard treatment of a grave-robber finally digging his just desserts made special by Cameron's mastery. Throughout most of the story the panels are framed by bones—except for the mid-story page where he strikes it rich and the panels are bordered by greenbacks! Although it's the only "no host" story in the book it's easily the most rewarding.

"Shattering the Time Barrier" is fairly well conceived: a prison executioner who operates the electric chair is tinkering with his machine and accidently opens up a dimensional doorway through which come the ghosts of inmates he has offed. They attack him, but back him up against the machine's power switch, and when it shuts down they are destroyed. He goes into the ghost world and recruits them to come back and murder tyrants and crime bosses. Throughout the story Fate is there, imploring him to stop before he becomes more evil than the ones he executes. By failing to heed Fate he signs his own death warrant.

Next comes "Hell Beyond the Crystal Ball," which amply demonstrates Ace's aptitude for awkward titles. After failing to invent a time machine, a frustrated scientist makes a deal with the devil that transports him into the future. But, as Fate reminds us every few panels, this was not wise. This story gets a little extra credit for its goofy yet entertaining art.

"Thrust of a Ghost Lance" (another "ouch" title) tells of an old Italian family that for generations has sold armor that breaks down on the battlefield. It's feeble formula supernatural vengeance from start to finish.


THE HAND OF
FATE
RUN, RUN! WE CAN WAIT! WE'VE WAITED YEARS... AND SOON YOU MUST STOP TO REST... SOON WE WILL GET REVENGE FOR YOUR BETRAYING US INTO DEATH!

Hand Of Fate #23 (Jun 1954): The "see-through" figure of Fate looks on as supernatural vengeance unfolds on a cover that doesn't exactly match any of the stories inside but conveys the spirit of most of them

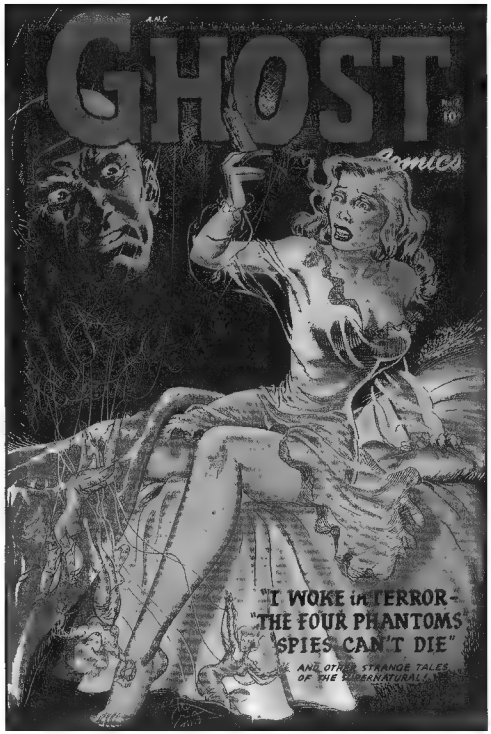
The "secret king" of horror hosts, the first and longest running, is Drew Murdoch, Special Investigator, from Fiction House's 'Ghost Gallery' in *Jumbo* and *Ghost Comics*. He hosts some stories, appears as a character in others, and sometimes merely takes authorial credit. *Ghost* #2 (Sep 1952) contains one story of each type. 'Ghost Gallery' began in *Jumbo* #42 in 1942 and ran through *Jumbo* #167 (the last issue) in 1953. Some (or all) of the material in *Ghost* #2 may be reprints.

Murdoch hosts "I Woke in Terror" about a mother and her two young children who move into a house where a murder has been committed. The corpse is still in a trunk in the basement. The victim's ghost appears before the kids and leads them down to the cellar, but just then the killers return to remove the evidence. The spook saves the kids and traps the crooks, but despite the formula plot the story is quite charming—as are all four in this excellent issue.

"The Four Phantoms" tells how a teacher caught in a flood with three students gives her life to save theirs and promises them just before she dies that she will come to them when they need her most. She helps the first

through a crisis when, as a young bank teller, he's tempted to steal money himself during a robbery. She persuades him to help stop the thieves. The young lady she talks out of committing suicide soon gets the acting break she despaired over. And the other man she convinces to stand his ground during the war when his fellows have all fallen. Murdoch isn't so much a character here as a person told the stories by the three on their annual visit to the teacher's grave.

"Ghost Squadron" featured wartime supernatural stories, and "Spies Can't Die" relates how a pair of Yankee spies in Russia get information out. After one gets killed he helps the other escape. Again, it's a "paint by numbers" plot that's done just right and enhanced by Rafael Astarita's beautiful linework.



The final 'Ghost Gallery' yarn has a mother whose love is strong enough to send her spirit forth to save her kidnapped son after she's been shot and lies in a coma. Again, it's predictable yet pleasurable it's a memorable book to have accomplished that trick four times in a row.

There are a host of other horror hosts—some better than others—but these three are reliable guides into this great genre at its early-1950s peak.

Ghost #2 (Spr 1952): Titillation and terror are the perfect package for an excellent issue; although Fiction House is an acknowledged master of "eye candy," its ample storytelling skills aren't appreciated enough

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DO THEY OR DON'T THEY...EXIST?

The Continued Case of Mythical Comics

by Michelle Nolan

This is the fourth installment of what has turned into a pleasantly surprising series, with a high degree of reader response and enthusiasm over my lists of obscure comics that may not exist.

I've probably received more feedback and comment, both in person and through the mail, over the previous three columns dealing with this subject than anything else I've written.

Actually, that should not be a surprise, since nothing drives comic collectors battier than not knowing whether they really do have a complete run of a title, genre or company!

And, it should be noted, American comic books have been annotated a lot more thoroughly than pulp magazines or paperback books. There are still numerous holes in the lists of minor pulp and paperback publishers covering the least popular genres.

Take a bow, comic fandom. You've done a great job over the past 40 years!

Since my previous "Nolan's Notebook" on this topic (*CBM* #72, Oct 1999), the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* has eliminated or clarified the listings for the large number of phantom issues in the "Listed in the *Guide* but do not exist!" portion of that column.

Now I need your help on a new list, covering nearly 40 titles. I'm certainly not prepared to claim none of these exists, but I have a strong hunch that most do not. If you can provide proof of the existence of any of them, please forward it to me, in care of *CBM*.

This list has been prepared in cooperation with Southern California indexer and comics historian Dan Stevenson, who has compiled the most comprehensive lists ever done for comic books of all companies and types, and longtime Ohio collector Gary Watson, who like Stevenson has one of the nation's largest collections.

Dan and Gary are so thorough, both in their research and collecting, that if they doubt the existence of a comic book, it becomes a darned good mystery!

Dan and Gary recently teamed to solve a puzzle for me concerning the first two issues of *Paul Terry's Comics* from St John (#85 and 86 in 1951) and the last two issues of *Terrytoons* from St. John (also #85 and 86 in 1951) before the title change to *Paul Terry's Comics*.

Both of these collectors are Terrytoons completists, and all four of these issues apparently are uncommon. Both #85s have the same contents and date (Mar 1951), as confirmed by Gary, and both #86s have the same contents and date (May 1951) as verified by Dan.

The only differences in the covers: the *Paul Terry's Comics* #85 and #86 have the "character strip" down the side, with Mighty Mouse, Heckle and Jeckle, Farmer Al Falfa and Gandy Goose, and the *Terrytoons* #85 and 86 do not have this "character strip."

One can only wonder at the legal and publishing complications that produced not one but two identical issues! I could imagine #86 being produced two different ways, but why was #85 also published this way? And just how scarce are these four comics?

Of course, I'm not yet prepared to say we have discovered every newsstand American comic book ever published from the 1930s through the 1960s, but I'll bet there are very, very few undiscovered mainstream issues still waiting to be unearthed.

The same can't be said for giveaway comics (called promotional comics in

Mazie #1-7 exist only in small size, no large #1-7 despite listing in **Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide**

the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* and listed separately). Every now and then, a giveaway title pops up that is not listed there. I have no idea if anyone out there is trying to build a complete set of promotional comics. But if there is, that person must endure a unique combination of fun and frustration.

Some of the riddles posed by the accompanying list are most likely merely book-keeping errors, such as the missing *Love Tales* #59 from Atlas/Marvel. Issue #58 is dated August 1952 and #60 is February 1955. But how are we ever to know for sure?

Others, though, provide case studies in comics that are truly rare (if they exist).

Take *Dinky Duck*. (Don't laugh, it's actually a pretty cute funny animal comic from Terrytoons.) We're reasonably sure the St. John #16 doesn't exist (Pines published #16 in Fall 1956, after the company gained the Terrytoons license from St. John, which published #15 in Sep 1955).

And for years the 12-issue *Approved Comics* reprint series of 1954—which reprinted only St. John comics—had a hole in the listing for #10. A few years ago, however, Stevenson discovered that *Approved* #10 is a Dinky Duck reprint, and Watson owns it, too.

But where is the regular *Dinky Duck* #9? In theory, it should be dated for mid-1954, since there are *Dinky Duck* issues #8 and 10 for that year. Could the *Approved* Dinky Duck #10 have somehow taken its place?

Lucky Star #1-7 exist in small size, but do #8-14, as per Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide?

By the way, one of the 12 issues in the above *Approved* series was not a reprint. Issue 2 was entitled "Invisible Boy" and dated March 1954, containing four Invisible Boy stories. Since this little-known comic has a cover by Ziff-Davis cover artist Norman Saunders and is lettered in the Ziff-Davis manner, the project is probably left over inventory. Ziff-Davis sold its short-lived comics line to St. John in 1953.

This Invisible Boy is an original character, totally unrelated to the character in the seldom-remembered 1957 MGM science fiction movie *Invisible Boy*, in which Robbie the Robot followed up his far better known debut one year earlier in *Forbidden Planet*. Perhaps the comic book Invisible Boy was a response to the newspaper strip Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, some of which were published by Harvey Comics in the early 1950's.

Not many people today care much about the *Katzenjammer Kids* and *The Captain and the Kids*, ancient strips with the same characters and a long and tangled legal and social history. But if you are a *Captain and the Kids* comic book completist, be aware that the first 15 issues still listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* are mythical. Perhaps they were included years ago to trap people who sought to steal Bob Overstreet's laboriously compiled data in order to produce knockoff price guides!

The Katzenjammer Kids did, indeed, have an original run of 15 issues and beyond (with the first 11 issues from David McKay before the series was sold to Standard). On the other hand, *The Captain and the Kids* had three special issues published in 1948, followed by the United Features Syndicate regular run, which began with #16 (Feb1949).

Curiously, the first regular *Nancy and Sluggo* title began from USF with #16 in 1949 (and ran through #23). I can find no earlier link, so I must conclude that UFS decided to begin both *The Captain and the Kids* and *Nancy and Sluggo* with #16 in order to present the illusion that these were established books, since in those days of crowded newsstands a #1 on the cover often was considered a negative, not a positive!

Another title with numerous non-existent issues listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* is newspaper cartoonist Nadine Seltzer's *Sweetie Pie*, one of the many "little girl" features popular in the 1950s and most of them produced to take advantage of the popularity of Little Lulu and Little Iodine along with a whole host of other "little kid" strips.

Ajax produced a *Sweetie Pie* #1 and #2 in 1955-56, and Pines came out with a #15 dated Fall 1957, but that's all there were until the two Dell Four issues of the early 1960s. The *Sweetie* Pie #3-14 issues listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* are non-existent. The biggest mystery here is how a minor company like Ajax—with a spotty publishing history—managed to obtain a licensed character like Sweetie Pie?

Likewise, the firm known as Nationwide/Magazine Publishers produced a series of digest-sized comic books in the early 1950s, including the first seven issues of *Mazie*,

which was one of the best of the Archie knockoffs. But there were no issues of Mazie #1-7 published in regular size, even though the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* lists them.

The same firm began publishing *Mazie* in regular size with #8 (Oct 1952), a year after the small size series ended, and soon began publishing short-lived series of *Steve*, *Mortie* and *Flat-Top*, which were the Magazine Publishers versions of *Archie*, *Jughead* and *Reggie*. In fact, the similarities are A-Mazie-ing!

Harvey picked up *Mazie* with #14 in 1955 and ran through #28 in 1958. But for years and years, I spent a lot of time looking for the non-existent regular-size issues of *Mazie* #1-7 that have long been listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, before finally realizing they don't exist.

The Golden Age *Blue Beetle* series from Fox included a #42 dated July-August 1946 and a #44 dated September-October 1946. For some reason, though, Fox apparently skipped #43. The clue to this mystery is that #41 is dated March-April 1946, but there is apparently no May-June issue. Collectors have spent years trying to find issue #43—and also trying to find out whether certain advertisements of its supposed existence were simply mistakes—but it's probably simply a book-keeping error by Fox.

Blue Beetle, in fact, remains the only major Golden Age super-hero character for which even a mild mystery remains! The rest have all been accounted for.

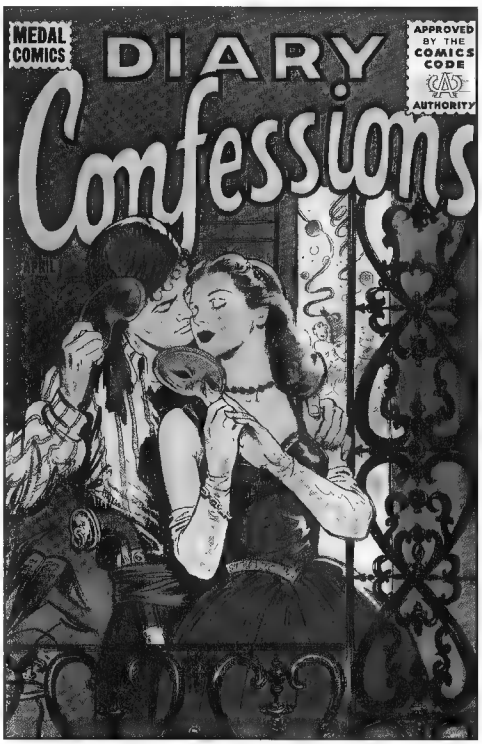
Then there was the "funny kid super-hero" *Super Brat*, which ran four issues from Toby in 1954 as a version of Dennis the Menace on steroids. Charlton bought this character from Toby after Toby expired in 1955 and renamed the title *Li'l Genius*. Charlton seems to have started its series with #6 (Jul 1955). Charlton collectors have spent many years searching for the almost surely mythical *Li'l Genius* #5.

On the other hand, I have always taken for granted that Harvey's small-size, subscriber-only issue of *Flash Gordon* #5 does exist. But can anyone provide a photo of this black-and-white comic's cover and a complete description of the contents? Now that I think of it, I can't ever recall looking at this issue.

Then there is the maddening case of *Diary Confessions* #12 (Dec 1955) from Stanley Morse's Key Publications, which apparently continued with #14 (Apr 1956, but incorrectly listed as Apr 1955 in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*). However, numerous romance collectors have spent years searching for *Diary Confessions* #13 without success. This is an example of the craziest aspect of collecting—how can anyone ever say for sure that #13 does not exist?

In fact, the indicia of #14 correctly but mysteriously states "formerly *Ideal Romance*"—a title switch originally made from *Ideal Romance* #8 (Feb 1955) to *Diary Confessions* #9 (May 1955), and also properly (and logically) acknowledged in the indicia of #9. Why was this fact stated all over again in #14? Does this hint that #13 does, indeed, not exist?

Anyone working on a complete collection of 1950s romance comics is in for a lot of frustration over this mystery!



Diary Confessions #14 (Apr 1956) was the last issue, but #13 has never been found, to my knowledge; does it exist?

Likewise, for years some romance collectors have sought out the issue of *A-1 Comics* #124 listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* as the second *Dream Book of Romance* #8. The real *Dream Book* #8 is *A-1* #110 (the last *Dream Book*), and the real *A-1* #124 is the funny animal *Hot Dog* #3.

Are there any other United States-published comics listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* of which you doubt their existence? Please let me know! Or are we close to closing the book on almost every comic book mystery?

Can Anyone Prove These Comics Exist?

Contact Michelle Nolan, via this magazine, with info you possess on these comics:

Animal Crackers #1 and 2—The only copies known are the Fox #31 (Jul 1950, not pictured in Gerber) and the Green reprint #9 from 1959 (pictured in Gerber).

Atomic Mouse #53 and 54—This Charlton series seems to end with #52 in 1964.

Blue Beetle #43—Fox's #42 and #44 exist in the 1946 series, which was halted for eight months before #45 appeared for June 1947.

Blue Circle #6—This exists only as a "never originally used" Enwil cover from 1946 slapped on a coverless early 1950s comics.

Captain and the Kids #1-15—The United Features Syndicate regular series started with #16 (Feb 1949).

Diary Confessions #13—Key Publications #12 (Dec 1955) and #14 (Apr 1956) exist, but #13 has never been spotted.

Dime Comics #1 (1951 issue)—The purported 1951 issue may be Canadian, but there seems to be no American issue. Not to be confused with the 1946 one-shot with a Silver Streak story.

Dinky Duck #9—#10 exists as both a St. John issue (Sep 1954) and as an Approved Comics reprint, and St. John #8 is Feb 1954. But where is #9?

Dinky Duck #16 (St. John)—St. John's Dinky Duck #15 is dated Oct 1955, and there is a Fall 1956 Pines #16 after the title was sold. The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide lists a St. John #16 as Sep 1953, but such an issue surely does not exist.

Dream Book of Romance #8 (A-1 Comics series #124 version)—A Dream Book #8 does exist, dated Sep-Oct 1954 and listed as A-1 Comics #110 in the indicia. But there is no Dream Book #8 (A-1 #124) as indicated in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. The real A-1 #124 is Hot Dog #3 and the real A-1 #115 is Hot Dog #2 (which is listed as #3 in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide).

Dynamic Comics #25—#24 apparently ended the series in 1948.

Dynamic Comics #8 IW reprint version—This has never been confirmed.

Ensign O'Toole #2—This title is a 1963 Dell one-shot #1.

Espionage #2—This title is a 1964 Dell one-shot #1.

Flash Gordon #5—This purportedly was sent to subscribers after Harvey folded its regular series with #4 in 1951, but has anyone seen one? It's listed as a small-size, black-and-white in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide and two collectors seem to recall seeing a photo of it.

Foxhole #10, Super reprint—Apparently a phantom title.

Gulliver's Travels #2 and 3—This is a 1965 Dell one-shot #1, not to be confused with Dell Junior Treasury #3 in 1956.

Hooray Comics—Pictured in Gerber but not listed in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, this apparently is a non-United States title.

Li'l Genius #5—This Charlton series was continued from Toby's Super Brat #1-4, but apparently it picked up with #6 in 1955.

Love Tales #59—This seems to be a mid-1950's Atlas/Marvel bookkeeping error following a two-year break between #58 and #60.

Love Trails #2—This title is apparently a Dec 1949 Marvel one-shot.

Lucky Starr #8-14 (Magazine Publishers/Nationwide)—The first seven issues exist in small-size versions. Do any others exist?

Madhouse #4—This exists in Ajax's first series in 1954, but apparently its second series in 1957 ended with #3.

Mazie #1-7 (the regular size comic)—#1-7 exist as Nationwide/Magazine Publishers small-size issues, but the series did not go to regular size until #8.

Merry-Go-Round #21—This is a phantom Croydon listing.

New Terrytoons #4—Gold Key published a Sep 1969 #4, but does a Gold Key #4 exist from 1963?

Picture Crimes #1, Jun 1937—This is pictured in Gerber, but apparently is not a comic book.

Porky Pig #99—This is purportedly a 1981 Whitman "bag" issue, but this may have been published only overseas, if at all.

Romeo Tubbs #1—This series exists only as Fox #26 and #28 in 1950 and as a Green Publishing Reprint #27 from 1952 with the contents of an issue of Pedro inside a Romeo Tubbs cover.

Space Detective #9 IW reprint version—apparently does not exist.

Super Duper #5, 8, 11—These apparently are Canadian issues if they exist. Super-Dooper #1-8 do exist from Able Publishing in 1946.

Sweetie Pie #3-14—Ajax #1-2 from 1955-1956 and a Pines #15 for Fall 1957 exist, but #3-14 do not exist.

Sweet Romance #1—Supposedly a Charlton 1968 one-shot but maybe a myth.

Teen Secret Diary #1 (second series)—Supposedly a 1972 Charlton one-shot but maybe a myth.

They Ring the Bell #1—Purportedly a 1946 Fox one-shot, but if this does exist, is it a newsstand comic or a giveaway?

Tommy of the Big Top #10—Standard #11 and #12 exist (Standard often started titles with either #11 or #5), but #10 apparently is a phantom issue.

True Comics and Adventure Stories #2 (1965)—This exists only as a one-shot.

Varsity #1—This apparently is a Parents company magazine, not a comic book.

Wild Bill Hickok and Jingles #76—Apparently the Charlton series ended with #75 in 1959.

GEORGE EVANS: A TRIBUTE

by James J.J. Wilson

Certainly, the name George Evans is familiar to *CBM* readers as one of the stellar group of artists that made EC a unique chapter in comics history. Still, he isn't usually listed among EC's horror elite of Davis, Ingels or Craig; the sf stars like Wood or Williamson; the war title regulars such as Kurtzman or Severin; or even as often as Reed Crandall or Jack-of-all-trades Kamen. That's unfortunate, because just like EC's other stars, Evans was supremely talented, and had a distinctive style like no other.

As a man, Evans was generous, intelligent, and outspoken, and one would be hard-pressed to find anyone who has a bad word to say about him. Though he was 81 years old, it still came as a shock when he passed away recently. The comics world—and the extended EC family in particular—has lost one of its greats.

I never had the chance to meet him in person, and didn't know him as well as I'd wished, but I always admired his work, and thoroughly enjoyed corresponding with him. He was always of good humor, even when complaining about politicians, censors, or the state of the world in general.

A few years ago, EC fan David Burlington mentioned that he'd struck up an acquaintance with George Evans, and I suggested he try to arrange an interview. Due to the busy schedules of both of them, though, the project progressed slowly for some time, and David eventually told me he was too busy to do it justice and turned over the interview to me. George and I then began corresponding in preparation—sort of a "feeling each other out" period—and we were literally mere days away from conducting the first segment of the interview when David sent me an e-mail telling me that George had died.

George Evans at his drawing board, circa 1954.

Soon after his passing, I decided that I'd write this tribute, and contacted several members of the EC family—his fans and friends—who generously shared their memories and helpful information.

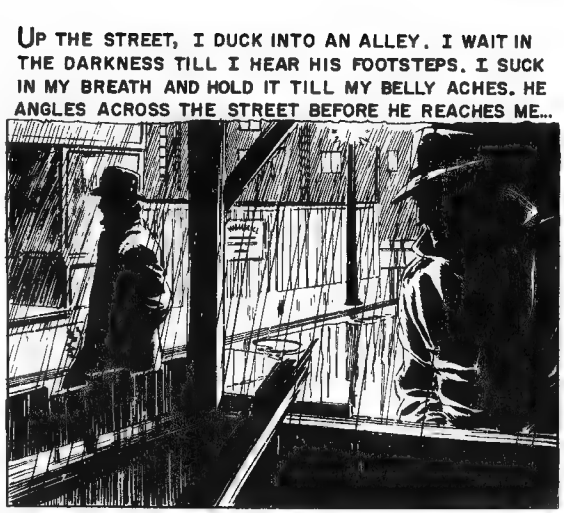
Naturally, no EC piece would be complete without consulting Russ Cochran, who then suggested I share this tribute with *CBM*. Russ told me, "As a young teenager reading EC comics back in the middle '50s, I grew attached to the styles of Feldstein, Craig, Ingels, Davis, Kamen, and Wood. I always paid attention to which artist did what, and it was always an event when a new artist would be introduced to the EC fold. I loved the art of George Evans immediately. His darkly-lit horror covers and splash pages, the way he could draw madness into the eyes of his players, his incredibly clean and graceful covers for *Aces High* and the 'film-noir' look of his panels. The world of comic art has lost another giant. The best tribute to George and Graham and all the other EC artists is to try to keep their work in print perpetually."

When I mentioned to Al Feldstein that George Evans was really one of the over-looked stars of EC, he said, "I agree. He was a consummate professional who did a super-competent job on every assignment I ever gave him. We worked easily and comfortably together. I went over the story with him—pointed out some salient details—and left the rest to him. He did a great job icing my basic cakes. And, I understand, he sincerely appreciated the fact that I never placed any restraints on his interpretive talent—such as layouts and sketches. That, I felt, was not my place or my function—otherwise I wouldn't be tapping his potential but mine."

PICTURE & ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

But George Evans had a well-established career before he showed up in Feldstein's office. His life-long passion was aviation—particularly the early days through the first World War. Beginning in 1936, he contributed illustrations to the pulp magazines of the day, specializing in airplanes, of course. Naturally, when World War II got going, Evans joined the Air Corps, though he never saw combat. After the war, in 1946, he found the pulp field all but dead, and entered the world of comics. He said he was "...just plain hooked on the story-strip form."

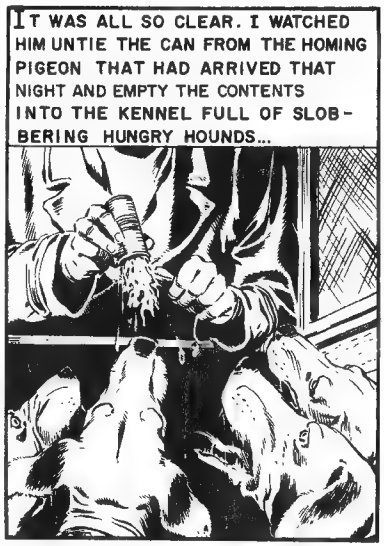
Evans's early work was, primarily, for Fiction House, contributing the fondly remembered "Lost World" series in *Planet Comics*. While on the staff there, he met a young prodigy by the name of Al Williamson, and the two immediately struck up a lasting friendship. Later, when Evans was working at Fawcett, they collaborated on the six issues of the *Captain Video* comic book. Evans said, "We had a hell of a lot of fun doing it. Al did mostly figures...the mechanical gimmickry was stuff I could toss off easiest." George always particularly admired Williamson's fluidity with the human figure, though one look at such work as the cover of *Shock SuspenStories* #16 proves that Evans was no slouch at it either. While at Fawcett, Evans drew the memorable "Slithering Horror of Skowtong Swamp" for *This Magazine is Haunted* [see this issue's "Weird Words" for notes on the story] and Williamson was already working for EC by this time and encouraged him to give them a try.


UP THE STREET, I DUCK INTO AN ALLEY. I WAIT IN THE DARKNESS TILL I HEAR HIS FOOTSTEPS. I SUCK IN MY BREATH AND HOLD IT TILL MY BELLY ACHES. HE ANGLES ACROSS THE STREET BEFORE HE REACHES ME...

Rain. Shadows. Dark figures skulking in deserted streets. Film Noir, George Evans-style!

Al Feldstein told me, "George Evans was a super talent, which is why I immediately hired him to work for EC when he showed us his portfolio." After that, Evans contributed frequently to the legendary horror and suspense titles, and often appeared in the war comics as well, although he frequently clashed with Kurtzman over the restrictive layouts.

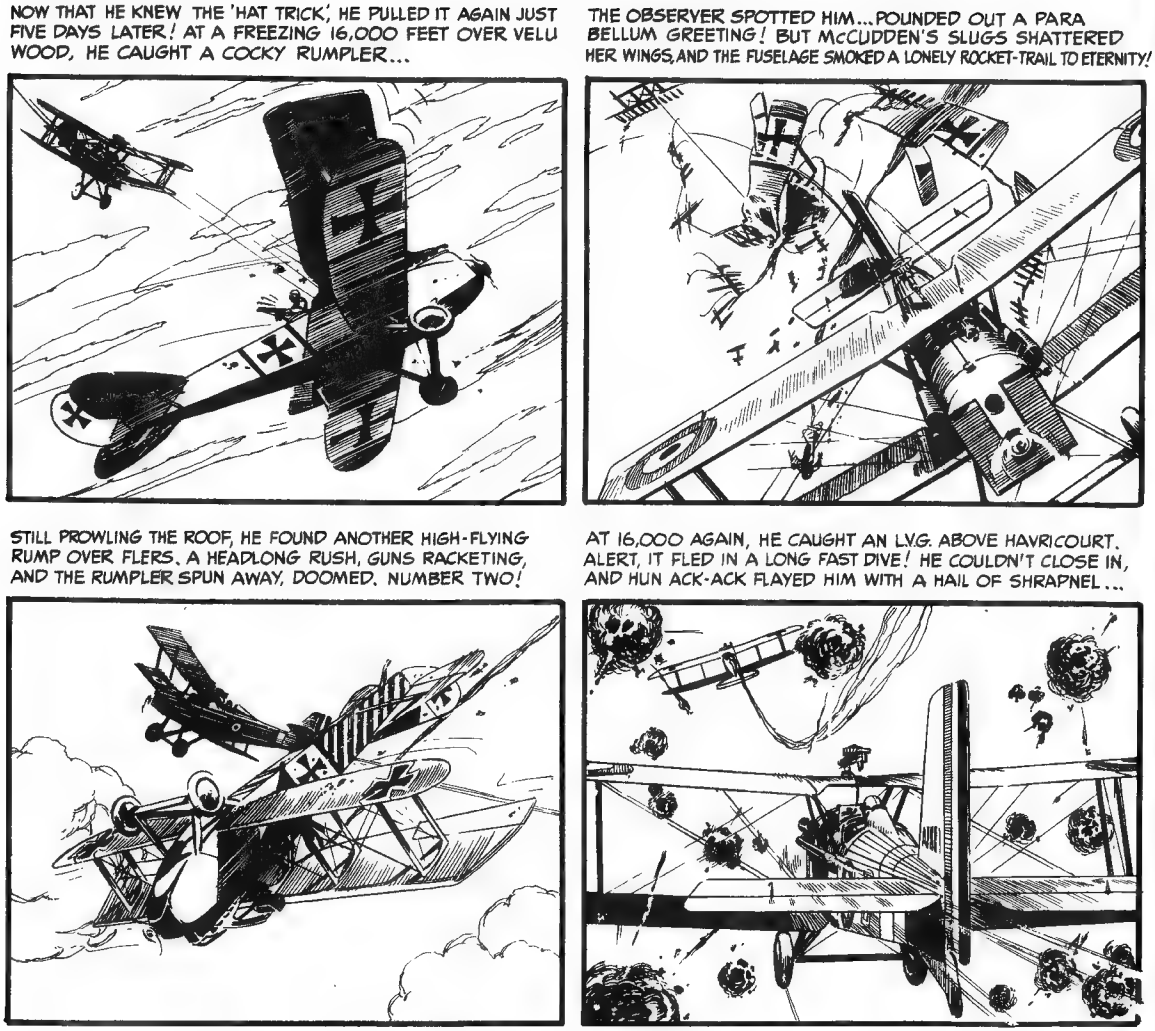
One of the beneficiaries of Evans's presence at EC was Johnny Craig, who frequently had George draw the second Vault-Keeper story in *Vault of Horror*. Craig told me, "Though I really did not know him well, I did have a great respect for him. Like you, I too thought he was a much under-rated artist and I studied his works avidly, hoping to glean a bit more knowledge to perhaps better improve my art. More than that, I respected and liked him as a person. He had a good humor with strong opinions on just about any subject and was never slow to express them. I thought he would last forever and regret his end came so soon. I thought he was a terrific guy and I am glad I had the chance to know him."


IT WAS ALL SO CLEAR. I WATCHED HIM UNTIE THE CAN FROM THE HOMING PIGEON THAT HAD ARRIVED THAT NIGHT AND EMPTY THE CONTENTS INTO THE KENNEL FULL OF SLOBBERING HUNGRY HOUNDS...

Alpo? Nope, it's canned wife, served up EC-style!

All comics fans know the details of the "witch hunts" that put a strangle hold on the industry in the mid-1950s, spurred on by Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent*. When asked if he ever had any qualms about doing horror comics, George said, "Not in the least. No kid I ever knew took any of the stuff seriously, or emulated any [of it]. Mass media is groveling to pressure groups, because it's easier to bow and say 'we'll straighten out, defend truth and our Constitution.' But the fact—the fact!—behind the callousness, the lack of respect for human life, is not films, TV, books, comic books, whatever. If media had an ounce of guts they'd finally tell the truth and expose the real causes of this degrading of the U.S.—maybe world—condition. The politicians first, lawyers next, and a court system totally corrupted and serving criminality at the cost of society and functioning citizens. Over my lifetime, I dug deep, deep into censorship, those who censor and profit from censorship. THEY ARE THE BAD GUYS. In Levittown, New York, I KNEW some of the people who

GEORGE EVANS


NOW THAT HE KNEW THE 'HAT TRICK', HE PULLED IT AGAIN JUST FIVE DAYS LATER! AT A FREEZING 16,000 FEET OVER VELU WOOD, HE CAUGHT A COCKY RUMPLER...
THE OBSERVER SPOTTED HIM...POUNDED OUT A PARA BELLUM GREETING! BUT McCUDDEN'S SLUGS SHATTERED HER WINGS, AND THE FUSELAGE SMOKED A LONELY ROCKET-TRAIL TO ETERNITY!
STILL PROWLING THE ROOF, HE FOUND ANOTHER HIGH-FLYING RUMP OVER FLERS. A HEADLONG RUSH, GUNS RACKETING, AND THE RUMPLER SPUN AWAY, DOOMED. NUMBER TWO!
AT 16,000 AGAIN, HE CAUGHT AN LVG. ABOVE HAVRICOURT. ALERT, IT FLED IN A LONG FAST DIVE! HE COULDN'T CLOSE IN, AND HUN ACK-ACK FLAYED HIM WITH A HAIL OF SHRAPNEL...

EC's colorist Marie Severin: "...his planes really looked like they were flying—you could tell he liked the subject."

mindlessly pasted up and distributed the Legion of Decency's posters around town, and THEIR kids swapped ALL KINDS of comics with mine—and some admitted that they themselves read and 'enjoyed the hell out of 'em.' Now the EC comics are collectors' items, and Estes Kefauver is dead, gone—and forgotten." George had strong feelings, and didn't mince words.

Ironically, the instigation of the Comics Code Authority and the death of the New Trend gave Evans the opportunity, however briefly, to do what would be his favorite of all the work in his long career. William Gaines, of course, started his New Direction titles, and George got one of his own, *Aces High*, for which he wrote and drew most of the stories and all the covers during its five-issue run. George was writing about and drawing airplanes, and he was never happier. "I liked—loved—doing *Aces High* and *Piracy*," he said. When the new titles soon folded, Evans continued with the Picto-Fiction magazines, but they didn't last long either, and EC faded into fond memory.

During EC's heyday, colorist Marie Severin was considered the "conscience" of the line. About Evans she says, "George knew more about comics of his time than most of the big talkers of today. He could back this up with years of diversified jobs with good storytelling, accurate art and no

ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

'short cuts.' At EC, I particularly enjoyed coloring his *Aces High* stories—his planes really looked like they were flying—you could tell he liked the subject. I think George would be fine doing all kinds of adventure; he was a real professional. I remember he was well liked and respected by the EC bunch. George was not a greedy man—he worked hard all his life and provided for his lovely family. A comfortable person to be with—a gentleman—a nice man."

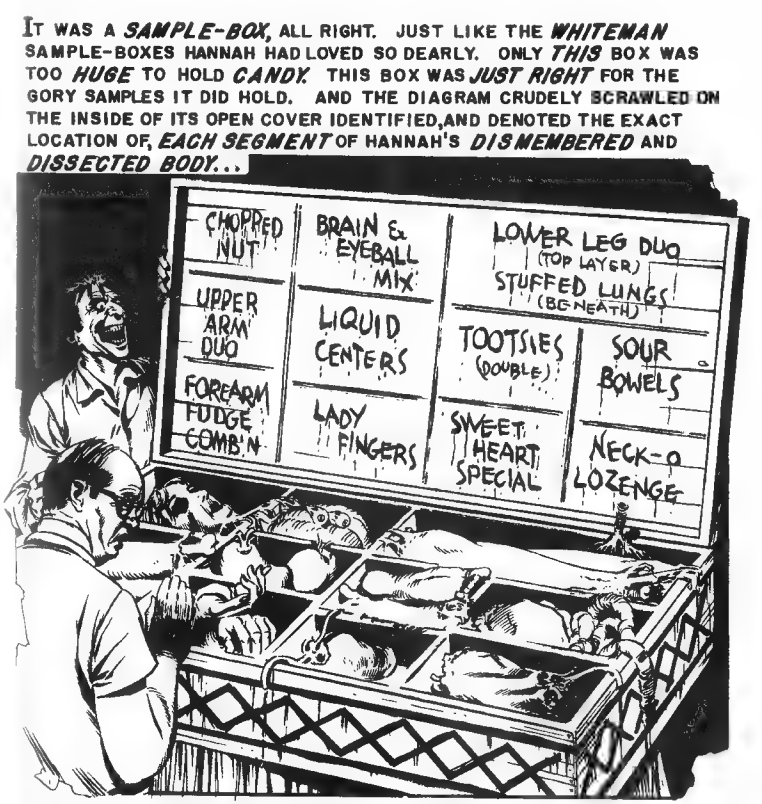
Jerry Weist is legendary as one of the early pillars of EC fandom and appreciation with his magnificent *Squa Tront* magazine in the '60s and '70s. When I asked him for his thoughts on George's passing, he wrote, "My memories are best focused on a single day that I spent with George Evans in his home and studio years and years ago—most likely around the publication date of *Squa Tront* #6—say about 1975/1976? I was dating a girl on Long Island, and decided to spend an afternoon with George Evans. He was especially kind to me, let me hang out in his studio as he was inking daily originals for *Terry and the Pirates* (for George Wunder), and I was amazed at his inking skills in relation to aping the Wunder/Caniff style. George showed me some of his treasures, I can now talk about (since most everyone is now not with us) how he had saved a few EC original treasures that were most likely returned to Bill Gaines when the EC reprints came into being shortly thereafter—he just 'loved' having them around. His great treasure was Harvey Kurtzman's original preliminary painting for the cover to *Two-Fisted Tales* (the Marine issue) where the Marine is in the snow saying, 'Hell, we Marines never retreat—we just advance in the opposite direction.'

"George and I spent a great deal of time talking about Graham Ingels, whom he was very close with during the EC years. George and his wife spent more time with Graham on a personal, family level than anyone else at EC. He and his wife were just as shocked as everyone else when Graham literally just got up and walked away from his life, work, and family during the 1950's.

"His regard for Bill was extremely felt. His regard for all the other EC artists was just as fresh as the days that he was working with them. He admitted that it was 'the best of times' for him as an artist. He was amazed at the 'fan' interest that continued with such fanzines as *Squa Tront*, and he wanted me to know how much he appreciated all that we had done with exposure of some of his unpublished work.

"He was a fine and gentle man. I will never forget how direct and honest he was as a person. Another link in the chain of EC creative giants and artists is now gone from us."

After the final demise of EC, Evans did some comic book work occasionally, over the years, for Dell, Classics Illustrated, *Jet Powers* comics and others, as well as some horror and war stories for Marvel and DC. Legendary artist Joe Kubert told me, "I knew George years ago, when he worked at DC. He was always admired by his fellow professionals, way back when he worked with Harvey Kurtzman. His attention to details on airplanes, uniforms, and backgrounds was unrivaled. In addition to which, he was a really nice guy."


IT WAS A SAMPLE-BOX, ALL RIGHT. JUST LIKE THE WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOXES HANNAH HAD LOVED SO DEARLY. ONLY THIS BOX WAS TOO HUGE TO HOLD CANDY. THIS BOX WAS JUST RIGHT FOR THE GORY SAMPLES IT DID HOLD. AND THE DIAGRAM CRUDELY SCRAWLED ON THE INSIDE OF ITS OPEN COVER IDENTIFIED, AND DENOTED THE EXACT LOCATION OF, EACH SEGMENT OF HANNAH'S DISMEMBERED AND DISSECTED BODY...
CHOPPED NUT
BRAIN & EYEBALL MIX
LOWER LEG DUO
(TOP LAYER)
STUFFED LUNGS
(BENEATH)
UPPER ARM DUO
LIQUID CENTERS
TOOTSIES
(DOUBLE)
SOUR BOWELS
FOREARM FUDGE COMB'N
LADY FINGERS
SWEET HEART SPECIAL
NECK-O LOZENGE

Hannah had a weakness for candy, and Feldstein and Evans had a weakness for black humor.

[continued on page 79]

George Evans

TRANSCRIPT (1/7/95)

by S.C. Ringgenberg

S. C. Ringgenberg: George, when did you begin working for EC Comics?

George Evans: The New Trend had been under way and they were beginning to draw some flak, I don't know what the year would be, probably about '51 or '52. It was just before Fawcett was hit by that lawsuit from DC.

RINGGENBERG: And what were you doing for Fawcett?

EVANS: Oh, geez, all kinds of stuff. Everything that came along, they stuck me doing it. Among other things there was *Bob Colt*, which was based, I think, on a TV character, *Captain Video* which also was based on TV characters, *The House of Mystery*, even love stories and adaptations of movies.

RINGGENBERG: So, Fawcett was going under and you had to find a new employer?

EVANS: Well, they were not at the time. I had no idea of their financial state. In fact, I don't think it had been decided, but Al Williamson, who cruised everywhere, and wherever he went he was as much a salesman for me and my stuff as he was for his own, he wanted me to go up to EC and he said: 'Fawcett appears to be going to lose this suit and it will probably put them out of business.' So he took me up to EC and introduced me to Bill and Al and we hit off from the first. It was like walking into a friendly house, just people sitting around, and we talked and they said, 'Well, we got a script here, do you want to try it?' So I talked to the people at Fawcett and they said, yes, it was true that things were going to be bad and if I had the chance it would probably be wise to take it. They were good people up a Fawcett. I liked every one of them.

RINGGENBERG: How did you meet Williamson?

EVANS: When I worked at Fiction House on staff he and several other kids visited the place from time to time. They'd just come up, I guess, and ask at the front office if they could come in and talk or see how things were doing and they would just walk up and down the aisles looking at people at work and talking with anybody who would talk with them. Bob Lubbers, who had been made the Art Director there, was a very intense man, nice enough but when he got intensely into the work, he did it, oh boy! Faster than anybody I ever saw, but his mind was on it and somebody bumped into his tabouret and almost knocked it over with all that ink, and he said, 'I'm going to take whichever one of you guys did that and hold you out the window and let go.' That was the third floor on Fifty-first street, so there were three shocked faces and John Celardo and I, being softer kind of people sort of soothed things over, and Al remembered it and wherever I went, Al made a point of coming around and we became very good friends. He was thirteen at the time.

RINGGENBERG: Oh, so he really *was* just a kid.

EVANS: Yeah, just a kid, still in school. So that's how we got to know each other, and as I say, have been friends since. And wherever he went selling his own stuff, he sold mine, And even the *Secret Agent*, when he decided not to do it, he told them at King Features to get in touch with me.

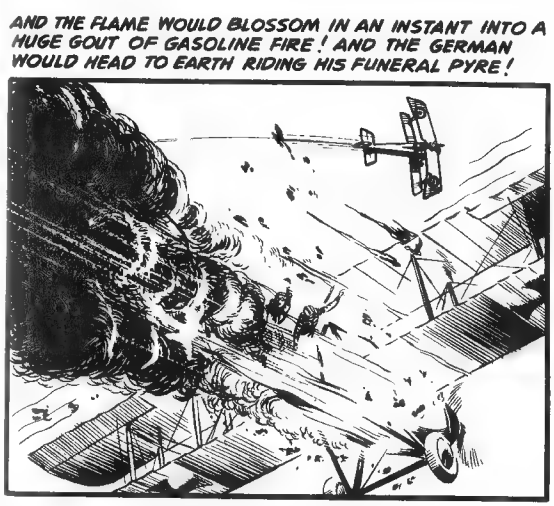
RINGGENBERG: Going back to the EC days, it's well documented that you love aviation art and history and I was wondering, why didn't you work more with Kurtzman on his magazines?

EVANS: Well, when I first went down there, Al took me to see Bill and Al, and they were doing the horror, the mystery and that sort of stuff, and I had done *The House of Mystery*, which was kind of horror stories, for Fawcett. Those were the things that they saw, and the script they gave me was for horror stuff, and Kurtzman had pretty well set up his staff there, he had Bill Elder and John Severin working together, you know, one penciling, one inking, I guess, Jack Davis, Wally Wood, and Bernie Krigstein wasn't there yet. Who was the fourth?

RINGGENBERG: Well, Kurtzman was occasionally the fourth.

EVANS: That's right, he did a lot of his own. Anyway, it was pretty well set up and I possibly might not have worked for him at all. You've heard the story of how I did the "Napoleon" script and I tried not to, but they needed it, nobody to assign it to and deadlines on and Bill asked me to do it and I changed some of Harvey's pictures and that upset him very much, so I didn't work for him for quite a while, but then a whole bunch of us were at EC together, delivering work or in to pick up work and Bill said, let's all go out to lunch. And sitting around it came out, maybe Al mentioned it, that I was kind of aviation-nuts and Harvey gave me one of those piercing looks that he had and he said, 'Ah, do you know anything about World War I aviation?" I said, 'Well, that's specifically the era that I'm interested in.' He said, 'How did you like "The Red Baron"?' John

Severin had done the artwork on it, and of course they had taken it from Floyd Gibbons' book, even the way it was handled. I said, 'Well, it was good, but with the errors that Gibbons had about the actuality. And with the airplanes, they were well drawn, but obviously John didn't know what rotary motors were.' You know the story there too, I suppose. The rotary motor goes round and round with the propeller. And John had drawn each cylinder standing nice and still. And Harvey didn't believe it. Anyway, afterwards because he looked it up, I guess, and found that it was a


AND THE FLAME WOULD BLOSSOM IN AN INSTANT INTO A HUGE GOUT OF GASOLINE FIRE! AND THE GERMAN WOULD HEAD TO EARTH RIDING HIS FUNERAL PYRE!

World War I dogfights were an Evans specialty.

fact, and he wanted authenticity, and I appeared to know what it was about, so he had me do, what was it, "Guynemer" and a couple of others for him, but again I changed some of his pictures and he got very upset about it.

RINGGENBERG: Well, when you brought in the job with the changes, what was Harvey's reaction?

EVANS: He looked at it and looked at it and he looked at it and I caught the feeling there and I said, 'You don't like it, huh?' He said, 'Well, you changed my layouts.' I said, 'I thought I was supposed to be the artist on this stuff. I thought your layouts were only a guide.' He says, 'No. When I do a layout, I have it all thought out and planned out.' And in one case, even, it was kind of funny. He handed me this layout of, what was it, the old Eindecker, you know, the single-wing plane and he has all kinds of stuff, with big blobs of pencil laid on. And I said, 'What's all this stuff?' And he said, 'That's when they fire the guns, or when it's hit with other gunfire, shreds of fabric and dirt and things would be shaken off the plane ahead.' I said, 'Geez! Nothing this big.' He said, 'Yeah, well, if it's coming right back at the pursuing pilot, even a speck of dust is going to look like maybe an orange.' Anyway, I put some of them in, but not all of them.

RINGGENBERG: Now, you did a lot more horror than you did the war stuff. Did the graphic nature of the horror stories ever bother you while you were doing them?

EVANS: No, it did not, and it's odd. I was just at a signing thing with Johnny Craig and it turns out that it did bother him. And I know it bothered Graham Ingels. But the horror genre dates back to the cavemen telling horror stories to each other and it's part of life. And what we did, everything was sort of tongue in cheek and really for fun, not scare the hell out of anybody the way Kefauver and that gang and Wertham had it. We would read the mail and I'd go in and find Bill and Al, you know, guffawing over some of the mail that came in, because the kids or teenagers, or whoever was reading it evidently took each plot as a challenge, trying to out-think the writer. And the mail would come in and say, 'I had a better ending than that.' And they would run pretty much the same story again and give it a different ending than the one the writer had sent in and expect another letter and usually got it. They actually became, what would you call it? Extended friends of a good many of the people who wrote letters. Larry Stark was one. His letters would come in and he'd actually do a literary critique of what we had done and often challenge the ending, and then they'd play around with different endings. You remember if you read the EC things, that that's they way they did it.

RINGGENBERG: Now when they killed off the New Trend titles and started the New Direction titles, were you the one who suggested that they do *Aces High*?

AND TOWARD EVENING, ONLY A FAINT LIQUID SPLASH RESOUNDED AGAINST THE BELL! FOR THE NEW ROYAL BELL-RINGER HAD INDEED RUNG THE BELL! HE, OR WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIS BATTERED BODY, HUNG INSIDE THE BELL... UPSIDE DOWN... A BLOODSOAKED GAG TIED AROUND HIS MASHED HEAD...
SPLATT!

George Evans: "everything we did was sort of tongue in cheek and really for fun..."

WHEN THEY TALK OF THE ACES OF WORLD WAR I... OF THE HEROES WHOSE BATTLEFIELD WAS THE SKY... THEY RECOUNT THE STORIES OF THE BOY FROM PHOENIX! THE INCREDIBLE BIG-MOUTHED BOY FROM PHOENIX! HIS CAREER WAS A CANDLE, BOTH ENDS LIT!... SHORT!... BRIGHT!... AND HIS NAME... HIS NAME WAS...
FRANK LUKE!
AH VOILA! IT IS THE YOUNG AMERICAN!

In George Evans' airplane drawings, every detail was correct; he was an avid historian of the World War I era.

EVANS: No, no. I told them in fact that it was probably not a good idea, that there would be a very limited [audience] in spite of the reaction they got from Harvey's books. The post-World War I aviation stuff might have gone better, and they did get around to that, too. But no, I didn't suggest it. They evidently brought it in just on the basis of what had drawn mail from the earlier line.

RINGGENBERG: Did you actually edit *Aces High* or were you sort of a consultant?

EVANS: He called it a consultant, and it's just as well it was only that. It may well have been that Bill would have let me edit it because I was out one day walking our dog, and there's a phone call, and Ev [Evans' wife] said, 'They didn't say who it was.' But when I got back to her and talked to her, she said, the voice on the phone had said, 'Where is he?' She said, 'Walking the dog.' He said, 'Oh, I guess if that's more important than his work I guess maybe he better go on walking the dog.' So it may have been that he was tempted briefly to, I don't know that this is so, but this was my speculation, to offer me the job of editing it, in

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Good friends Al Williamson and George Evans collaborated on only one story, from **Valor** #5.

which case it would have been a totally different book. But he did pay me twenty-five dollars to pick up what he called major errors. And with the first issue, there were so many that when I handed him the list I think he paid the twenty-five dollars extra each issue just not to bother.

RINGGENBERG: Did they ever actually use any of your comments in the stories to change things?

EVANS: No, because they bought the stories from people who in their own right were buying them from other people they believed knew something about World War I aviation, Whitehouse and William E. Barrett, and other pulp people.

RINGGENBERG: After the New Direction books they did the Picto-Fiction books briefly. You worked on some of those, didn't you?

EVANS: Yeah, the stories were a mix of stories and as with the other books, Al tried to sort of tailor them to the artist who was going to be doing them. And, you know, they were not done in continuity form, they were written fully out in text and was profusely illustrated. They wanted a variety of styles for the illustrations, so everybody was fooling around with halftones and wash drawings and coquille board, you know, surfaced boards, and trying for a different technique.

RINGGENBERG: Did you enjoy doing that work?

EVANS: I did very much, yeah. And I know Graham Ingels did, too, because that had always been a big thing with him. He was good in different media ideas.

RINGGENBERG: Speaking of Ingels, I've heard rumors over the years that he suffered from a drinking problem. That's what eventually made him retire from comics.

EVANS: No, that wasn't what got him out of comics, but he did, he had joined Alcoholics Anonymous, but he had periods when he would drift away, and what it did do was destroy his family. It broke his family up. But he left comics because of course after EC closed down all the comics were in pretty bad shape and he was a well-rounded enough artist he went looking elsewhere and I guess he found a job up with the Famous Artists course, which had surfaced at that time.

RINGGENBERG: I had read that he was a painting teacher after he left comics.

EVANS: Uh-huh, that's right. Well, for a little while, until he got the job with that Connecticut outfit, the correspondence school, he had set up a teaching studio on his own property there. He had a little studio, hut I guess you would call it, well set-up, you know, nice little place there. That

was his studio, and he had eight or ten students he was teaching, and doing spot freelancing of whatever came by. He helped me with a few things that I did, and as I say, anything that came by. But then he went full-time (as) a staff employee up at the Famous Artists course and that eventually got him enough notice, or gave him enough background so that he got a huge assignment to paint a series of murals for the state of Florida, on the history of Florida, and they were gorgeous things. I saw eight by ten color prints or color slides of them that his daughter had, that he sent her, and they were gorgeous, and very, very, very well done. When that assignment petered out, I guess he did prints, art for prints and kept himself busy as a painter until Cochran, through Bill, got in touch with him and asked him if he would like to try some originals with the Old Witch and such. He refused at first, but I guess talking with Bill and seeing the realism of the economic situation, I guess it looked like a pretty good deal. His daughter sent me color photos of some of them and Roger Hill sent me the colored prints from the brochure and they're excellent, and then his daughter sent me prints of other things that he did, scenic stuff down in the Everglades, that sort of thing. Very, very nice stuff. He was an excellent painter.

RINGGENBERG: Yeah, that's what I've heard. I've seen the Old Witch painting he did for Bill Gaines and I thought that was excellent.

EVANS: His stuff went for somewhere in the neighborhood of five to eight thousand dollars at Cochran's auction, I was told. Even the roughs, which were quite well-developed, went for three, four thousand, but they might have drawn more except, as Bill Gaines himself put it, everybody wanted Graham to paint as he had painted that picture of the Old Witch, you know, with the off-drawing and the kind of awkward stumbly stuff, but instead, he had developed as a draftsman and he painted one of the Old Witch scenes with a beautiful young lady as part of the scenery and well-formed, well-developed, well-painted.

RINGENBERG: It sounds like you stayed in touch with him after he left comics.

EVANS: We kept in touch with his daughter. We had gotten to be good family friends on Long Island, and it's tragic, because we liked all of them, they got along well together for the most part, but as I say that was what the drink did, it broke up his family, but we kept in touch with his oldest daughter. He had a younger boy, too. But Deeana kept in touch with us and then later Graham said to Bill that he would like to resume contact with his children at least, and Bill knew that we still were in touch with Deeana, so he put us back in touch with Graham and reunited at least Deeana and him. I think Gertrude, his wife, never forgave him for the things that happened.

RINGGENBERG: That's a shame.

EVANS: Yeah, it was. At the end, I guess it hurt him. You know he finally realized how everything had come apart. But on his own he didn't do that badly from what I hear. I would not say that we had remained in close contact, but he called a couple of times then and talked to us.

The hound is sniffing the Cadillac's tire, to see if it is real or light-boxed.

ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

RINGGENBERG: I had always wondered what became of him. The impression that I'd gotten from talking to Bill Gaines and various people was that he didn't want to be remembered for the horror stuff, that he felt badly about how grisly his work was.

EVANS: Yes. Apparently what you felt was true, because I got that from Johnny Craig, who would fight with them to modify some of the horror stuff they did for him. And some fan had brought in one of his ax things, if you remember, which got on the Kefauver television interview.

RINGGENBERG: Oh, yeah, that cover with the severed head and the ax.

EVANS: And he said that he hadn't wanted to do it, that he tried to get them to change it but they wouldn't and when it came down to it, he was an employee and he did it. But he said it did trouble him. That's Johnny Craig. And I guess Graham, but Graham really played it the same way I did. He thought these things were for fun, and you can see it in his pictures.

RINGGENBERG: Oh, yeah, especially the ones that were more fairytale oriented. You can tell he was having fun with them.

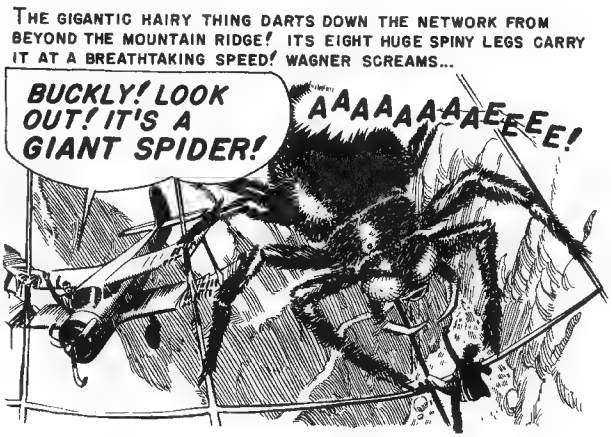
EVANS: You're right. And he did. He really did, because he took the same attitude I did, that everybody likes to gather around and tell horror stories and be horrified in a safe way. I know I still do.

RINGGENBERG: To jump back to something else in the EC days, I know you and Williamson collaborated on one job that was in *Valor*. How did that come about?

EVANS: I don't think it was meant to be that way, but Al and I were good friends for years and years, and with the Fawcett things, I would get these fifty-two page books to do on a tight deadline and often I would give a yell for Al and he would journey over from Brooklyn, into the wilds of New Jersey and get himself a good case of hay fever and sniffle and snort, but he'd help me out. And when he would get an assignment he, at that point, would do all the things that he liked to do, the sword and sorcery bit, but the pedestrian pictures, you know, where somebody's just walking down the street with a row of tenement buildings or something, he hated to be confined to doing that sort of stuff, so he would send up an SOS, and I would help him out and do those pedestrian things.

RINGGENBERG: You always seemed like you had a good handle on doing the civilian stuff, people, street clothes and the naturalistic settings.

EVANS: In fact, Bill told me that was what charmed him and Al. They gave me a story involving some innocuous little guy who at heart was a murderer, and when I brought in the story they were charmed. Al would give you the thing done up with Leroy lettering and the panels planned for size and placement, so you didn't get much leeway. This drove Bernie Krigstein nuts, you know.


THE GIGANTIC HAIRY THING DARTS DOWN THE NETWORK FROM BEYOND THE MOUNTAIN RIDGE! ITS EIGHT HUGE SPINY LEGS CARRY IT AT A BREATHTAKING SPEED! WAGNER SCREAMS...
BUCKLY! LOOK OUT! IT'S A GIANT SPIDER!
AAAAAAAAEEEEE!
The spider and the fly, EC-style.

RINGGENBERG: Oh yeah, I've heard.

EVANS: And he would take and cut the lettering up and cut the paneling up and do it his own way. But, gee, that's dedicating an enormous amount of time, so I would work with what they had given me. But they sat there guffawing over what I had done, because Al evidently had pictures in mind and then mine went different from the way he went and he loved it! Unlike Harvey, Al was delighted with what could be done with the stories he gave.

RINGGENBERG: Well, would Al ever tell you, we need this guy in this panel and have a particular action happening?

EVANS: No, he had all the copy down there. We'd read it through there. And if you asked him something, he'd say, 'Well, this is what I thought. But, you're doing the artwork.' That was Al's attitude.

RINGGENBERG: Do you have any memories of doing a 3-D story called "The Planetoid" with Al Williamson?

EVANS: I do, yeah.

RINGGENBERG: I talked to Angelo Torres and he said frankly, working with all the overlays on the 3-D stories was a pain in the butt.

...AND THIS IS THE STORY OF THE YOUNG MAN AFTER WHOM THE 'IMMELMAN TURN' WAS NAMED!
...THE STORY OF THE FIRST GERMAN TO FLY AN ARMED SCOUT PLANE AND SHOOT DOWN ANOTHER PLANE!
...THE STORY OF 'THE EAGLE OF LILLE' AS TOLD IN HIS OWN LETTERS TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS!...THE STORY OF MAX...
IMMELMAN!
GEORGE EVANS/53

The story of Max Immelman was one that George Evans knew well.

EVANS: Yeah. It took patience and I wonder if it didn't destroy all our olfactory nerves for a bit because, boy, the stuff you worked with stank. It had a sharp, piercing kind of ugly smell, I guess an acid of some kind to make the ink stick to the slick overlay stuff.

RINGGENBERG: Was it hard to ink on the acetate?

EVANS: How can I put it? Hard. The acetate, when the ink went on it, would sort of rise up in a little ridge instead of the line laying on the surface. And the ink destroyed the brushes very rapidly, so after a page or so your brush began to get loggy and the lines less graceful. You had to switch to another brush and just write off the cost. We'd have all gone broke (because of) the damage that it did so rapidly to brushes. And you could not clean them up afterwards. They were destroyed.

RINGGENBERG: Now, on that story, it looked like your inks over Al's pencils. Was that the case?

EVANS: To the largest degree that is the case, yes. Areas, again, where he had no interest in doing them, he would have loose sketches in and I would tighten them up and if I felt that…in other words I had full leeway. He'd say, 'You want to do something else entirely, do it.' But, he was a

ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

damn good storyteller and a damn good artist even then, even as a youngster and what he would put down I might re-pencil a little here, a little there in order to be able to ink from it. But largely I stayed with what he had indicated as his storytelling and the layout of the panel.

RINGGENBERG: I've read that you've done a bit of advertising work as well.

EVANS: Yeah, I did, that's right, Johnson and Cushing, an agency that primarily did continuity type of advertising that went with the big comic sections of the time. Do you remember them?

RINGGENBERG: It would be in the Sunday paper?

EVANS: Right. Did a lot of that. And then they handled spot illustrations and a segment of comics for *Boys' Life* and not really big money advertising, say like Hadden Sundblom and the big advertising artists, Rockwell and the like...on the lower edges of it. But I'll tell you something, advertising people were not nearly as nice to work with as the people who put out comics.

RINGGENBERG: You said at the beginning of the interview that coming into EC just felt comfortable. Could you just talk a little about the atmosphere up at the offices? I've heard Bill Gaines was a great guy to work for.

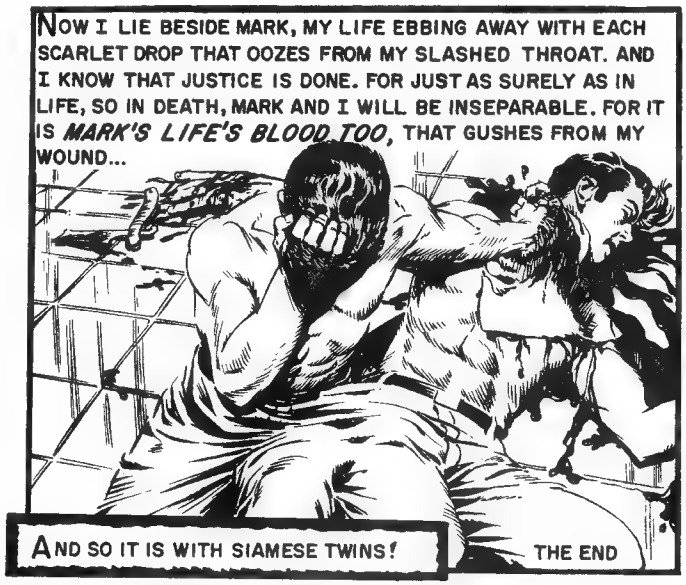
EVANS: Yes, he was. In fact, moving there from Fawcett's was not really a move. We lived in Levittown, Long Island and the house we bought up here in Mount Joy is basically a brick kind of Levitt house. So, we felt at home moving up here the very first day and it was the same as going down to EC. The offices of Fawcett put out a whole run [of] paperback books and men's magazines. I think they had *True* magazine and other big things, but they had a more extensive office and yet the atmosphere was the same. You walked in and everybody would holler 'Hi, George! What's new?' You'd holler out to every name you knew. And it was a big family thing up there, even the boss, whose name was Will Lieberson(?), if he happened to be there he'd come out and sit around and quack a while. You know, this is heady stuff, after Fiction House, where they had the Inner Sanctum and so on. And when Al took me down to see the people at EC I walk in and there's Bill and Al sitting on a big couch in this smaller office space, and real friendly and nice and nobody knew me. I didn't know anybody, but they were still looking up: 'Hi, how ya doin'? What's new?' So, the atmosphere felt pretty much the same and then with Bill and Al it was hard to believe they were the big moguls at the place because they put on no airs whatsoever. Never did, all through the time right till Bill died. He was the same old Bill.

RINGGENBERG: And right after EC folded, did you, I mean, was that a bad period or were you able to get enough work then to make ends meet?

EVANS: I could make ends meet but it got much leaner of course. And the other comic people were not too eager to see us EC people around. In fact, do you know Bob Kanigher?

RINGGENBERG: Yeah, I've interviewed him, in fact.

EVANS: Well, he was running the war books up at DC at the time and I went in to see him out of a clear sky. He looked at the stuff I had done for EC and then tossed it on the desk and stared up at me and said, 'You people at EC ruined the comic book market and now you come around with the rest of us who are still able to make a go and think we're going to give you work? Not me.' But in later years I worked for Bob Kanigher, or at least through Murray Boltinoff, did stories that Bob wrote.


NOW I LIE BESIDE MARK, MY LIFE EBBING AWAY WITH EACH SCARLET DROP THAT OOZES FROM MY SLASHED THROAT. AND I KNOW THAT JUSTICE IS DONE. FOR JUST AS SURELY AS IN LIFE, SO IN DEATH, MARK AND I WILL BE INSEPARABLE. FOR IT IS MARK'S LIFE'S BLOOD TOO, THAT GUSHES FROM MY WOUND...
AND SO IT IS WITH SIAMESE TWINS!
THE END

For this Feldstein-edited story, with typical EC twist ending, Evans got the artboards already lettered. His job was to fill the empty space with a picture that worked with Feldstein's text.

George Evans

TRANSCRIPT

by Paul Wardle

George Evans was born in Pennsylvania on Feb. 5th, 1920, and died June 22, 2001, also in Pennsylvania. In between, it is known that Evans contributed a great deal of comic book illustration for many of the top publishers, including Fiction House, Fawcett, EC, Dell/Western, Gilberton, Gold Key, DC, Marvel, *National Lampoon* and Malibu, among others. During much of the time that he was a comic book and aviation magazine illustrator he lived in Long Island, New York with his wife Evelyn. Their marriage endured for over 55 years, and in the 1990s, they moved to Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, where their rambunctious black dog kept George young in his last years.

Before you read the interview that follows, I thought it important that readers be introduced to the George Evans I knew, however briefly.

I first met George and his wife at a Toronto comic book convention on October 6, 1991, where he sat next to other fine illustrators such as Al Williamson, Mark Schultz and William Stout. Evans and Williamson had been friends since the late 1940s, and it was heartwarming to see them laugh and reminisce as fans brought them old comics to sign, many of which they hadn't seen in decades. They were clearly pleased to see how well this work from their youth held up, and that people were still interested in them. Evans recalled to Williamson how he once made a suggestion to their mutual EC alumnus Graham Ingels about a piece of art he was working on, something that Evans said would have been improved if Ingels had just changed the angle of the boat he was drawing, only to be told by the crusty master of horror: "Mind your own damn business!" The two friends shared a laugh as Williamson nodded and said, "That's Graham!"

George Evans in his studio, circa 1992. Photo by Paul Wardle.

After hearing the wealth of knowledge Evans possessed and the amount of detailed information his mind still held about the Golden Age of Comics, I began to wonder why no one had ever interviewed him. It was a small matter to get his phone number from the *Mad* magazine offices and the interview was conducted on August 28, 1992. Some of it was eventually published in *The Comics Journal* #177 (1995).

George Evans and I talked on the phone several times more after that. He was a night owl, and our talks would go on far into the wee hours. We would usually start out talking about comics, and end up talking about politics and current events. Evans was a very well-read man, history being a specialty. He was a very liberal thinker, especially among men his age. We had a lot in common and I was pleased when he referred to me as a friend. In 1999, when I attended a convention in Pittsburgh, I made a side trip to visit him at his home, and Mr. and Mrs. Evans couldn't have been nicer. They insisted on taking me out for dinner and wouldn't let me pay. George also refused payment for the sketch he drew for me that day, as we talked for five hours in his home. The walls of his studio were covered with original art

by Harold Foster, Alex Raymond, and various aviation artists, yet such was his modesty about his own work that none of his own art adorned the walls. In fact, I sent him a page of his "World Around Us" original art shortly after our visit, since he had none of his own comic work from that period. He also showed me a scrapbook of aviation art that he had been collecting since 1931, including many of his favorite artists in the genre, such as Blakeslee and Rudolph Belarski.

He was an inspiration to me on my own artwork, and a fine example of humanity. When Frank Frazetta and Reed Crandall were unable to get work in the early 1960s, it was Evans who farmed out jobs to them so they could get by, and both artists were eternally grateful. It was Evans who reunited Graham Ingels with his estranged daughter, some thirty years after their separation.

Before we get to the interview, I would like to relate the following anecdote George told me about the "Ghastly" one himself, whose drinking, to those who knew him, was almost as legendary as his talent for drawing grisly horror comics.

"We met one day, up at EC, and he asked if I had come in by train, which I had, and he said, 'You're riding home with me.' We left EC, and as we hit the street, he said he should've gone to the bathroom back at the office, and needed to find a place soon. So we stopped at a bar, and, of course, he mentioned that we couldn't just go in to use the bathroom without ordering anything, so I nursed one beer, and Graham had three, while the bartender glared at me. He [Ingels] had parked out in Queens, so we took the subway out to get his car. When we got out of the subway, it was a case of 'Oh, that beer went right through me!' [laughs] So we had to find another bar for him to leave the old beer, and then we had to put some new beer in. So, on the way out, the six, seven or eight beers he'd had—and he may have had some before I met him at EC—had begun to affect him. As we were driving along the parkway, there wasn't much traffic, thank God, but he suddenly put on the brakes, and I asked him what he saw. He said, 'Didn't you see that guy up ahead?' Well the guy he saw was about half a mile up ahead, and there were other cars where he would get too close before putting on the brakes and I'd be hanging on for dear life! Well, we made it out, and I volunteered to drive him out to his place and call my wife to drive me home. I told him the booze was beginning to affect his driving, and he got a little mad. He drove himself home and my wife picked me up, and we called and made sure he got home all right. Now, when I get off the phone, I often say, 'Take care,' but in those days I would say, 'Stay sober.' So without thinking, I said, 'So long, Graham. Stay sober.' Well, he called up at 4:00 in the morning. Evidently this rankled him during the night, and Ev picked up the phone. I was scared that it was going to be bad news, and it was Graham saying, 'What did that bastard mean when he said "Stay sober"?!'"

Paul Wardle: Did you have any formal art training?
George Evans: Oh, sure.

WARDLE: Where did you study?
EVANS: My family lived in New York at the time, and I went to The Art Student's League. The instructor there was Frank Reilly. I was working so these were night classes, and [laughs] when I had a rush job I didn't turn up, but I got a good deal of what he had to teach.

WARDLE: These rush jobs. Were they for comic books?
EVANS: Oh, yes. After the war I got a job with Fiction House, a publishing company that put out *Planet Comics*, *Wings Comics*, *Jungle Comics*...

WARDLE: And I believe you did "Lost World" in *Jungle Comics*...
EVANS: You got it.

WARDLE: And the "Jane Martin" strip in *Wings*?
EVANS: Right.

WARDLE: Did you find the need to take classes at the same time as you were working to improve, or was it something you had planned to do anyway, and you just got a job faster than you expected?
EVANS: Well, a little of both. Listen, I was stupid enough to pass up the G.I. Bill. I had put my time in the service, but when I [small chuckle] walked in the door at home, both my parents, who were ultra-ultra-conservative, said, "You're not going to go on the $52.20 club are you? Go get yourself a job!" That's when I was living in Pennsylvania, and I wandered over to New York (where I eventually moved), walked the streets and tried all the publishers of pulp magazines. That was my aim then, to see if I could get a line of pulp magazines where I could do the story headings.

WARDLE: Did you manage to do that?
EVANS: Well, some, but the pulps were on their last legs. The comics had taken their place. Fiction House published both. They had had a guy named Artie Saaf who had just left, [and so] they had an opening and I showed them what I'd done. They took me on, although I didn't get to do [lead stories] right away. I did the usual kinds of stuff to start: ruling gutters, cleaning up, filling in blacks and working with their regular artists.

WARDLE: In other words, you got all the jobs that nobody else wanted.

EVANS: Yes that's right. Would you believe at one point, they brought in Frank Frazetta to do something of the same sort?

WARDLE: So you and he were assistants?

EVANS: Well, I was a slave I guess you'd call it. I understood what I would be doing and I took the job and there was the hope that I would move on to features, but Frank expected that he would be doing features right away. He was only a kid at the time.

WARDLE: A child prodigy, I hear.

EVANS: He surely was. I think he was only about fifteen or sixteen at the time. The stuff just flowed out of his fingertips. He did a little ruling of borders and a bit of the clean up work, but mostly, he would have his own sketchbook, and page-by-page he just spent his time constructing his own stories and adventures in pencil. They were good enough that he could easily have moved up to a lead position, but no one paid any attention to that. They just realized that he wasn't doing what they were paying him to do and they terminated his employment. I stayed on, however, and they eventually did give me features to draw. When I finally got up the nerve to show the editor some of my sample pages, I at first thought he didn't like them because it took him so long to get back to me. Then, one day he called me into his office, and said, "What the hell are you doing this job for, if you can draw like this?" I think the first story I drew was called "Tigerman."

WARDLE: Oh yes. That was in *Fight Comics*.

EVANS: That's right. I think it was.

WARDLE: Is that where you first met Graham Ingels?

EVANS: No, he left just before I got there. He had gotten a job as the editor up at Better Publications. I think they also called it Ned Pine's group. And when I went looking for stuff to do at night, Graham would feed me whatever jobs he had that I could handle, and that's how we got to be pretty good friends.

WARDLE: Did you have a starry-eyed naïveté when you started in comics, and were your hopes quashed?

EVANS: Boy, you called it! I was pretty naïvè when I took the job on staff. I was so happy to be working there to begin with, but I had enough faith in myself that I doggedly stuck with it until I moved up. I also realized that I had a hell of a lot to learn about the production end of it and the process of putting a magazine together. It was a learning period. I figured I'd get a break and I did after just a couple of months. [laughs]

WARDLE: Well, you didn't fare too badly. Did you ever run into unscrupulous publishers, even after you went on to drawing complete stories, who tried to rip you off?

EVANS: Not too much, but others did. You know, in meeting some of these publishers, my wife and I would drive in from New Jersey. When Evelyn and I were first married, we lived in New Jersey part of the time, and in Long Island part of the time. I always made it a point to take her with me, because when I worked at Fiction House, we often went to parties and so forth. Also, she had a damn good eye for shysters. There was a pair of them who put out a line of comics and they did pay pretty good rates. They got in touch with me and asked if I'd like to work with them. Well, [laughter] we went and had lunch with them and talked a bit and I told them I'd let them know. Well, afterwards, Ev said "The one guy's not so bad, but the other guy, I wouldn't trust any farther than I could throw him!"

Well, I turned it down, and by God, years later, the guy she didn't trust ended up committing a murder and ended up in prison! He lost his temper and stabbed someone to death. They were Charles Biro and Bob Wood.

WARDLE: Did you find you could make a living in those days just drawing comic books, or did you find it necessary to supplement your income with other work?

EVANS: I never put everything into comic books. I always had other things going. I had work at the end of the pulp era at Fiction House. Not good stuff. I look at it now, and go, "Aw, cripes!" [laughter] A little later, I did get to work for one of the semi-slicks, *Air Trails*. It had been *Bill Barnes' Air Trails*, but they dropped the fiction with Bill Barnes and I had hoped to do illustrations for that character. It was a monthly series.

WARDLE: Was it an aviation magazine?

EVANS: Oh yes, it had begun as a pulp magazine in the early to middle 1930s, but after World War II, [it was changing]. In fact it's still on the stands today, but now it's more of a technical aviation magazine and they don't use many illustrations. It's a total slick and they use mostly photographs and technical stuff, but I did do a number of paintings for them. I also kept an account with two religious outfits, one Catholic and one Lutheran. I've got a foot in both camps! [laughter] I even did some stuff for a Jewish outfit. I have no qualms. I'm not really a religious person. And I can see that there are things I'm not smart enough to understand, and any one of them might be right. Probably all of them are a little bit on the right side if only we could figure.

WARDLE: In some of the stuff you did, you not only did the penciling and inking, but the writing and lettering as well.

EVANS: That's quite true, I did. In fact I do virtually all of it with the *Corrigan* strip. My daughter does the finished lettering, but times when she hasn't been able to do it, I have done that too.

WARDLE: So you write the strip as well as illustrate it?

EVANS: Yeah. Now the comic books in the Golden Age were pretty naive. They had a very strict code to follow. Even those that got into trouble with the various legions of decency, and what's his name...Kefauver. My God, you look at the EC stuff, and the reason it has endured is that it was all tongue-in-cheek. They called it *Shock* and the like, but the point was that there was a twist ending to outguess the reader and that brought the biggest response of all.

WARDLE: And if you are too graphic, there is no shock or suspense achieved anyway.

EVANS: Exactly! Well, you're an artist, and you've got it exactly. You can do so much more by having the off-panel terror, because you're leaving it to each individual's imagination what the terror is, and everyone's got a different terror. With one, it's a rat, and with someone else, like my daughter who letters for me, it's the great big grizzly bear.

WARDLE: [laughter] Now after Fiction House, you worked for a few years at Fawcett. How did you make the jump to working for EC?

EVANS: Al Williamson. Al has been better than an agent to me. He has been a friend from way back in the days at Fiction House. Things that he couldn't do or didn't want to do, he always asked if I'd be interested in it. That's how I got to do the *Secret Agent Corrigan* strip.

WARDLE: How would you compare working at EC with say Fawcett or Fiction House?

EVANS: Oh, Fawcett and EC were comparable in that they were nice people and they treated their artists well. Fiction House was not that bad, but at the time, the people who had run it with much success had gone. I think [the boss's] name was T.T. Scott. He had run it for decades and when he died, the business was inherited by his son-in-law, who had a plantation down in the south and was more concerned with running the plantation, growing pecans and stuff. He would come up for maybe the Christmas holidays, but was always on the phone, butting into the business of Malcolm Reese and Jack Byrne, who were the editors, and who had come to Fiction House after successful stints at other companies, and were well qualified for the job. His butting in was a detriment. They were not bad to work for. Byrne was an excellent guy. He would come in and talk to the artists and writers. If he had a problem with your work, he would come over and talk to you like a reasonable man. I think Reese was above him, and a little more distant, but it was the same with him. He knew everybody by name. It was a fairly small outfit. They had a writers' room and an artists' room and we got along very well. Actually, the reason they went to freelancing later on was that there was too much damn horseplay going on. They were too easy going. It was okay when there were holiday parties and such, but when it carried over into every day work, and deadlines were missed, it was costing them money. Then they got serious, and for a time they appointed an art director, but he was the one who originated a hell of a lot of the horseplay. Then they went to freelancing, and they folded not long after, both the pulps and the comics.

WARDLE: Wasn't there a "house" style at Fiction House that they wanted you to emulate?

EVANS: No. Nobody ever said anything about that. What you saw may have been everybody trying to draw either like Milton Caniff or Alex Raymond. Everything was *Flash Gordon*, *Jungle Jim* or *Terry and the Pirates*. Even the stories were done that way. In fact, going around looking for work myself, when I would show my stuff to editors, they said, [moronic-type voice] "Uhhh... it doesn't look much like Caniff, and it doesn't look much like Alex Raymond." I said, "It looks like my stuff. How about giving me a chance?"

They'd say, "Naw. We think the fans like one or the other."

WARDLE: Although most of the major Golden Age publishers had some good people working for them, many of the comics look like they'd been slapped together. ECs, in contrast, were so richly illustrated and layered with shadows and complex backgrounds. Was this a conscious effort on the part of the artists, or do you think it was due to the spirit of competition that existed, because so many good artists worked there?

EVANS: Very much a conscious effort. Certainly on my part and those I knew. Remember, EC came in five to eight years after comics had hit the big time and replaced the pulps. They had, I guess, many of the best people on staff, because they were paying a few dollars more per page than other companies, and they had good stories to work from instead of the usual hacked-out crap formula, and they themselves went looking for people whose work they liked. Feldstein and Jack Kamen had worked for other companies and knew who the good people were. Al Feldstein did a lot

of the art at the beginning and gradually moved more into the writing and couldn't do that much of the artwork any more. Again, it was Al Williamson who had gotten me in. He and Frazetta and Krenkel had been doing things for them and I was working at Fawcett at the time, who were keeping me as busy as I could be. In fact, I had actually assembled a staff of people then and was using inkers, including Al. Then he came up and told me that Fawcett was going under, having lost that suit with DC.

WARDLE: The Superman/Captain Marvel dispute.

EVANS: Right. The infringement on the Superman character.

WARDLE: A travesty of justice if ever there was one. DC brought out Aquaman after Timely had already been publishing Sub-Mariner.

EVANS: I have good vibes from the later DC, but bad, bad vibes of the old DC. Before Jenette Kahn came in, it was a bunch of vipers. Don't you know how they won the lawsuit? There were two brothers, the Costanza brothers. One of them was mainly a letterer.

WARDLE: John Costanza

EVANS: And Pete was the artist. He was called upon in the Captain Marvel strip to draw a nuclear submarine. He told me this himself. He was carrying a guilt trip with him, and he told me the story years later when we met at *Classics Illustrated*. People told me he did this with other people to explain the situation. He just assumed that when they called for this nuclear submarine, the artist who had drawn a similar submarine in a *Superman* comic had gotten photographic reference, so instead of using his own reference, he just copied it directly from the *Superman* comic book.

WARDLE: Oh no.

EVANS: Yes, and that is something I could not begin to believe!

WARDLE: But now stuff like that happens all the time.

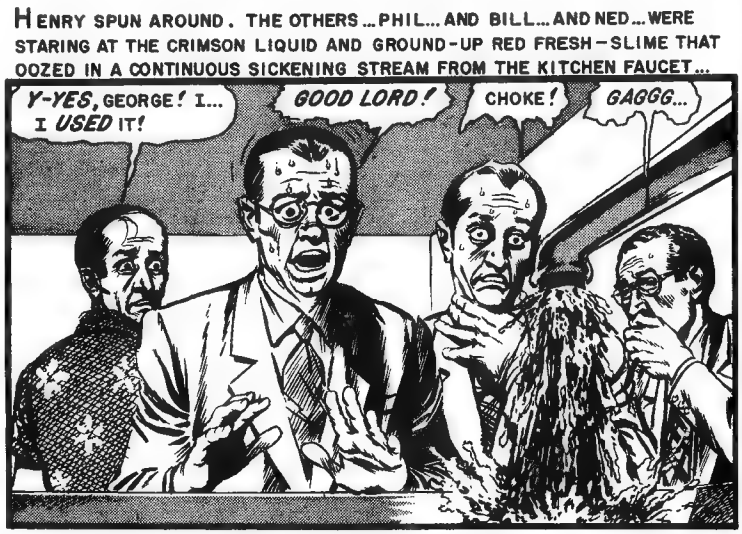
EVANS: Sure. It has been said time and again by people in the know, that if the suit were brought about today, it would be thrown out of court.

WARDLE: How would you contrast illustrating a Feldstein story as opposed to a Kurtzman story?

EVANS: The amount of fun and enjoyment would be much greater with the former. With Al Feldstein, he wrote the stories and gave you the freedom to interpret them in your own way. I had previously been doing science fiction and mystery/horror stuff at Fawcett, and the first story Feldstein gave me was a horror story. When I brought [the finished pages] in to them, Bill Gaines and Feldstein sat there with me and began to go through them. Well, they flipped! They were sitting there hollering, "Hey! Look at that!" I mean, this is the stuff you would pay to have fans say, if you were giving an address! When they published the program booklet for the EC Fan Addict Convention (1972), Gaines told the story of how when they first saw my stuff, they couldn't believe this innocent, chubby little guy with rosy cheeks had produced this scary horror stuff that had a different slant. For instance, the story where the guy is dismembering his wife [and putting her] down the kitchen garbage disposal ("Indisposed" from *Haunt Of Fear* #25). Instead of showing graphic scenes of dismemberment, as someone else might have done, I saved the shock until the very last panel where the guy opens the faucet and the blood comes running out. Then the wide-eyed, horrified look on everybody's faces. The script as Al had written it, could easily have been handled with her getting minced up bit by bit. Graham Ingels was in fact the most popular, and he had people rotting and eyeballs falling out.

WARDLE: I love that stuff too.

EVANS: Okay, but I played it the other way.


HENRY SPUN AROUND. THE OTHERS...PHIL...AND BILL...AND NED...WERE STARING AT THE CRIMSON LIQUID AND GROUND-UP RED FRESH-SLIME THAT OOZED IN A CONTINUOUS SICKENING STREAM FROM THE KITCHEN FAUCET...
Y-YES, GEORGE! I... I USED IT!
GOOD LORD!
CHOKE!
GAGGG...

The final panel of "Indisposed", from **Haunt of Fear** #25.

ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

WARDLE: I wanted to ask you about that specifically. While, say, a Wally Wood story would be populated with beautiful or heroic figures, and an Ingels story would have villainous and rotting characters [laughter from Evans], more often than not you seemed to draw quite ordinary-looking people. It was clear that you had the talent to make them more attractive or more grotesque if you desired, but because you chose not to, your stories carried a particular impact of their own. You could picture the horror happening to real people.

EVANS: Sure. You're singing my song. This is the whole process. I've done a couple of scary stories in the *Corrigan* strip, and never was there any threat of censorship, because I play it the same way. I'm not bringing someone out of the sewer who is putrid and decaying. Al Feldstein would tailor the stories to fit the artist that would be drawing them.

WARDLE: Getting back to the difference between working with Feldstein and Kurtzman, I heard it said that you disliked Kurtzman laying out the story for the artists to follow and that you would change things on his layouts just to bug him.

EVANS: No, not to bug him. I remember when he did one aircraft story, afterwards he came up to me at lunch when [the whole EC staff] were all out at a restaurant, and he said, "You changed this. You changed that." I told him, "Yeah, but I had an idea for a better picture."

Then he said, "Yeah, but I had it all laid out the way I wanted it."

So I replied, "Then why did you ask me to do it?" And I still feel that way.

Why in God's name would you hire people who have a reputation or who've made a living in comic books that attracted you to the point of asking them to do a story for you, and then have them draw your [way]. You're making him no more than a hired hand for yourself and your ego. On the other hand you've got a guy who has shown he's quite capable of taking an idea and doing a good job on the art.

This was the joy of working for Al. When you brought in the finished art, he would say, "Oh geez, I never imagined a picture like that. Look at this, Bill!" And Bill would look and say, "Holy cripes! Here's another one, Al!" This was a delight. You'd work for them for free.

But with Harvey, he explained to me one time on a war story about air combat, he had the scene shot from behind the attacking aircraft, and the one up front...he explained it all to me and his layouts don't mean a thing to me, because in his version all the wings are flat and both planes are flying in a tranquil position, and suddenly guns are shooting and he's got big sound effects written across the sequence. I didn't put them in, and I made the aircraft spinning crazily and tilted and swerving because that's how aircraft go!

He said, "But you spoiled everything, because this was supposed to be bullets hitting the aircraft, and because of the impact, pieces are falling off, dust is flying off, and it's coming back towards the attacking pilot."

[laughter] Well, first of all, they washed the airplanes down, because if you're carrying 140 pounds of dirt, that's 140 less pounds of fuel or bombs you can carry. Anyway, when I explained all this, he wouldn't listen. I said, "Harvey, it doesn't go like that." and he said, "Yes it does." and I said, "No, it doesn't!"

WARDLE: [loud laughter] Okay. You don't have any hard feelings towards Kurtzman, do you?

EVANS: Oh, good lord no! We've had the most enjoyable discussions, even on the things where I violated his sanctity. [laughter] We got along very well. At times, when we were at conventions together, [see *Squa Tront* #8 convention transcripts] if we were on the same panel, he took side A and I took side B. As a matter of fact, if I took [the same] argument, Harvey probably would've reversed his stand, just so we could be on opposite sides. That's the feeling I had...but maybe not. He had deep feelings about what he was doing and so did I. One of the funny things about Harvey was that, when we'd go to these artists' get-togethers or office meetings, where people are asked for their input, I will swear I heard Harvey damn the horror books and the Wally Wood science-fiction that played up the girls with the large...

WARDLE: Breasts.

EVANS: [laughter] Yes. He said he didn't want any part of that. Yet he went on to do *Little Annie Fanny*. That [beats] the EC science-fiction stuff [by a mile].

WARDLE: Yes, he has said in interviews that he didn't care for the horror books, yet when they first started, before they hit their stride, Kurtzman's horror stories in the first few issues are some of the best stuff. You obviously enjoyed drawing the aviation stories for EC because you're interested in aviation. Did you fly in World War II?

EVANS: I was an aviation mechanic. I wanted to be a flyer, but I have one eye that's almost inoperative. [Even with that] I see well, but I'm a one-eyed guy. The other one sort of balances it.

WARDLE: Well, you can't have everything. At least you didn't get shot at. In the later days of EC, there were other writers who filled in for Al Feldstein...people like Otto

[continued on page 45]

The Longest-Running Comics

Dick Tracy is now, officially, seventy years old. His anniversary was celebrated in a memorable sequence in Jim Scancarelli's *Gasoline Alley*. Tracy shows up on October 4 in Scancarelli's strip to solve a crime, which he does by October 30, whereupon he signs off via his two-way wrist radio with the usual police nomenclature, "10-4," thereby identifying, once again, the official anniversary date.

When I talked with Scancarelli about Tracy's cameo appearance, Jim joked that he's always wanted to draw Chester Gould's cleaver-jawed gumshoe and that commemorating the anniversary in this fashion gave him a good excuse for realizing this life-long ambition.

Dick Locher, the *Chicago Tribune*'s Pulitzer-winning editorial cartoonist, is the current master of the iconic flatfoot's fate, and he told me that he was thrilled to see Scancarelli put Tracy into his strip, an occurrence made possible by the ownership of the two strips: both belong to Tribune Media Services syndicate. Locher, who has been drawing Tracy since inheriting it in 1983, also said he was very proud to have kept Gould's stalwart continuity strip going into its eighth decade in this age of gag-a-day strips. *Tracy*, he opined, must be in the top ten in the longevity category.

Later, I made a list of strips that debuted in the early 1930s or before that are still being published. Locher is right: *Tracy*'s in the top ten. It occupies the ninth niche, to be painfully exact.

Blondie, which began in the fall of 1930, is a year older, but the oldest American comic strip still being published and not in re-runs is *The Katzenjammer Kids*, which started December 12, 1917. Others of the elderly include *Snuffy Smith* (which debuted in 1919 as *Take Barney Google, F'instance*, a title shortened almost immediately to the protagonist's name), *Popeye* (which started as *Thimble Theatre* in 1919), *Nancy* (which commenced as *Fritzi Ritz* in 1922), *Annie* (first titled *Little Orphan Annie* in 1924), *Tarzan* (1929)—and *Gasoline Alley*, which began November 24, 1918.

Incidentally, two of the oldest strips are, today, continued by the same cartoonist: Hy Eisman produces both *Popeye* and *The Katzenjammer Kids*, both Sunday features.

Alley Oop, born in a bush league syndicate in 1932, will be the next to reach a 70th birthday, but *Alley*'s publishing history was interrupted briefly: the initial Bonnet-Brown distribution ceased July 21, 1933, and while the NEA picked it up immedi-

(this and facing page) The first and last appearances of Tracy in Gasoline Alley

My uncle? Murdered?
10/4
Miss Melba! This is detective Tracy!
Won't you have a seat, please?
Hey! I seen him in th' papers!
Let's wait outside, Rufus!
Sit down, you two!
Yes'm, Mr. Bracy!
SCANCARELLI
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ately, distribution didn't begin until August 7, 1933. Moreover, the NEA incarnation revisited and streamlined the Bonnet-Brown inaugural sequence, in effect repeating it.

And after that, we'll be celebrating, in order, the 1934 births of *Mandrake the Magician*, *Flash Gordon*, *Mary Worth* (who was *Apple Mary* in those days), then *Steve Roper/Mike Nomad* (starting as *Big Chief Wahoo* in 1936), *The Phantom* (1936), and *Prince Valiant* (1937).

Even at three-score-and-ten, however, these strips have a way to go before surpassing the all-time records set by strips no longer being published. The first daily comic strip, *Mutt and Jeff*, reached a mellow 75 years before it was discontinued in 1982; and *Bringing Up Father* ("Jiggs and Maggie") just passed 87 before it ceased in 2000. Although *The Katzenjammer Kids* is the longest-running American comic strip, it and *Tarzan* appear only once a week, on Sundays. The others in this litany are (or were) published seven days a week. Of these, *Gasoline Alley* is the oldest at 83. But the oldest continuously published daily cartoon character isn't found on the funnies page.

The oldest continuously published daily cartoon character in American newspapering is the Weatherbird that perches in a half-column box on the front page of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The Weatherbird celebrated its 100th anniversary on February 11, 2001.

The newspaper "weather icon" is an intricate part of comics history. James Swinnerton is often credited as one of the three "founding fathers" of American comic strips, and his contribution to the vital ingredients of the medium—a character whose repeated appearances built reader loyalty—was a "little bear." Working at the *San Francisco Examiner* in 1894, Swinnerton started drawing a bear cub (dubbed "Baby Monarch" after the state's grizzly mascot) in various corners of the paper to publicize the forthcoming Midwinter Exposition at the end of January. The bear was an overnight success with readers, and after the Exposition closed, Swinnerton kept right on drawing the animal—in the weather forecast box on the paper's front page.

Swinnerton's bear established the importance of repeat appearances at least a year before Richard Outcault launched the Yellow Kid in the *New York World*. But neither bears nor Yellow Kid are around anymore. The *Post-Dispatch* Weatherbird is.

The anthropomorphic fowl of indeterminate species was invented by Harry B. Martin on a train ride from Montana to St. Louis in December 1900. He'd been studying a magazine photograph of some baby birds (possibly blackbirds) in a nest with their beaks wide open, waiting to be fed. Believing (as he put it) "there was an idea there some place," he started sketching birds and beaks, and when he got back to work at the *Post-Dispatch*, he drew up six little chirpers attired in different weather-related apparel—for snow, clouds, hot, cold, sunny, rain. The idea was to repeat the drawings in keeping with whatever the weather was.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch Weatherbird's first appearance on February 11, 1901, by Harry Martin

Martin soon learned two things: first, the weather came in more than six varieties; second, readers, particularly children, were loud in their disappointment if they saw a bird drawing repeated. Lo, a tradition was established—a different bird, differently clothed, for every daily appearance.

At first, the bird didn't say much. And then when he began talking, he spoke only of the weather. But later the Weatherbird began commenting on the day's news, deploying a maximum vocabulary of six words.

Thank yo', Mr. Tracy, fo' bringin' my uncle's murderer t' justice!
10/30
I'm glad we could borrow you from headquarters for so long a time!
That's my job!
Calling all cars! This is Dick Tracy wrapping up the "Missing Keyhole Case!"
10-4!
TRACY'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY
2 WAY WRIST RADIO
SCANCAROLLO
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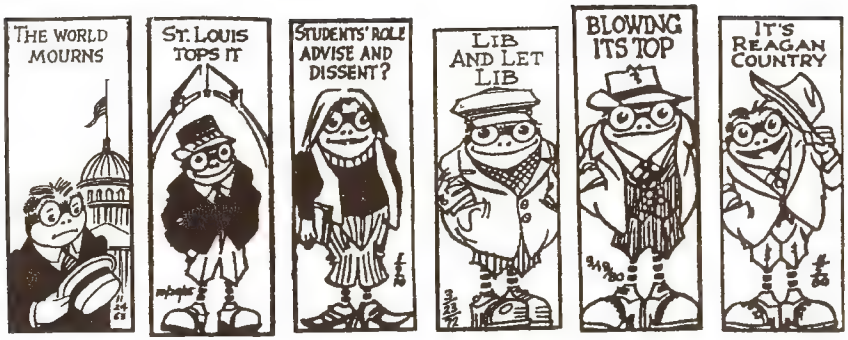


(left to right) The Weatherbird and the bird line on President Kennedy's death (Nov 22, 1963), the completion of the Gateway Arch, St. Louis (Oct 28, 1965), student protest at the Kent State shootings (May 4, 1970), Congress passing the ERA (Mar 22, 1972), Mt. St. Helen's erupting (May 18, 1980) and the election of Ronald Reagan (Nov 1980); (rest of page) other cartoonists offer congratulations to their long-lived feathered friend

The Weatherbird has become a symbol of the paper in much the same way as Eustace Tilley is *The New Yorker*'s symbol or Esky, the google-eyed roué, is *Esquire* magazine's. The bird even appeared for a time on the tail of the newspaper's corporate jet. He's been merchandised nearly as much as Snoopy. And Louis Armstrong wrote a song, "The Weatherbird Rag," recorded by King Oliver in 1923.

Only five cartoonists have limned the feathered fellow since Martin left the paper in 1903. One did it for fifty years. Currently, another Martin, Dan (no relation), is doing the drawing.

The Weatherbird's comments often take the form of gawdawful puns. When the world was gaga over the King of England's relationship with an American divorcee in 1936, and everyone wondered whether Edward VIII would flout tradition and marry Wallis Simpson, the bird's comment punned on the British national anthem: "Will Britannia waive the rules?"

And when Edward abdicated in order to marry "the woman I love," the bird said: "Heavy reign fall in London."

These "bird lines" (as they are termed) are not invented by the cartoonist who draws the picture. Very early in the bird's history, his remarks were being concocted by editors and reporters and the like. Today, the task falls to the copy editors. The process begins about 5 o'clock in the afternoon when the news editor gives the copy desk a list of the stories that will run on the front page. The news editor and the copy editor decide which story the bird will remark about, and then the copy editors are invited to conjure up something pithy for the bird to say.

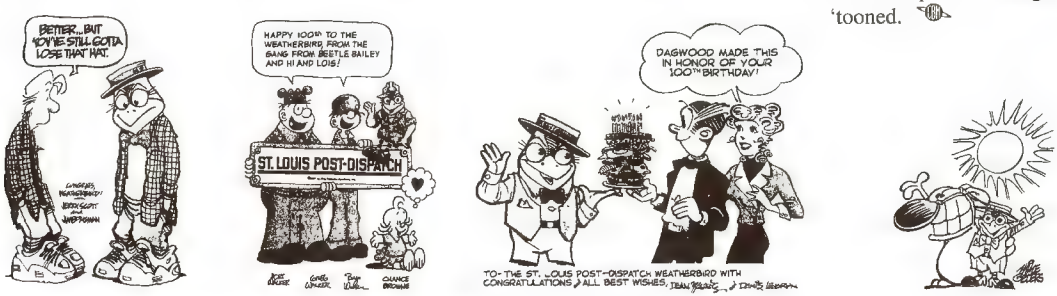
The copy desk is quiet most of the day, but at "bird line time," the vicinity is full of chatter as the ingenious wordsmiths compete for the "honor" of contributing the day's comment. The winner gets paid a buck.

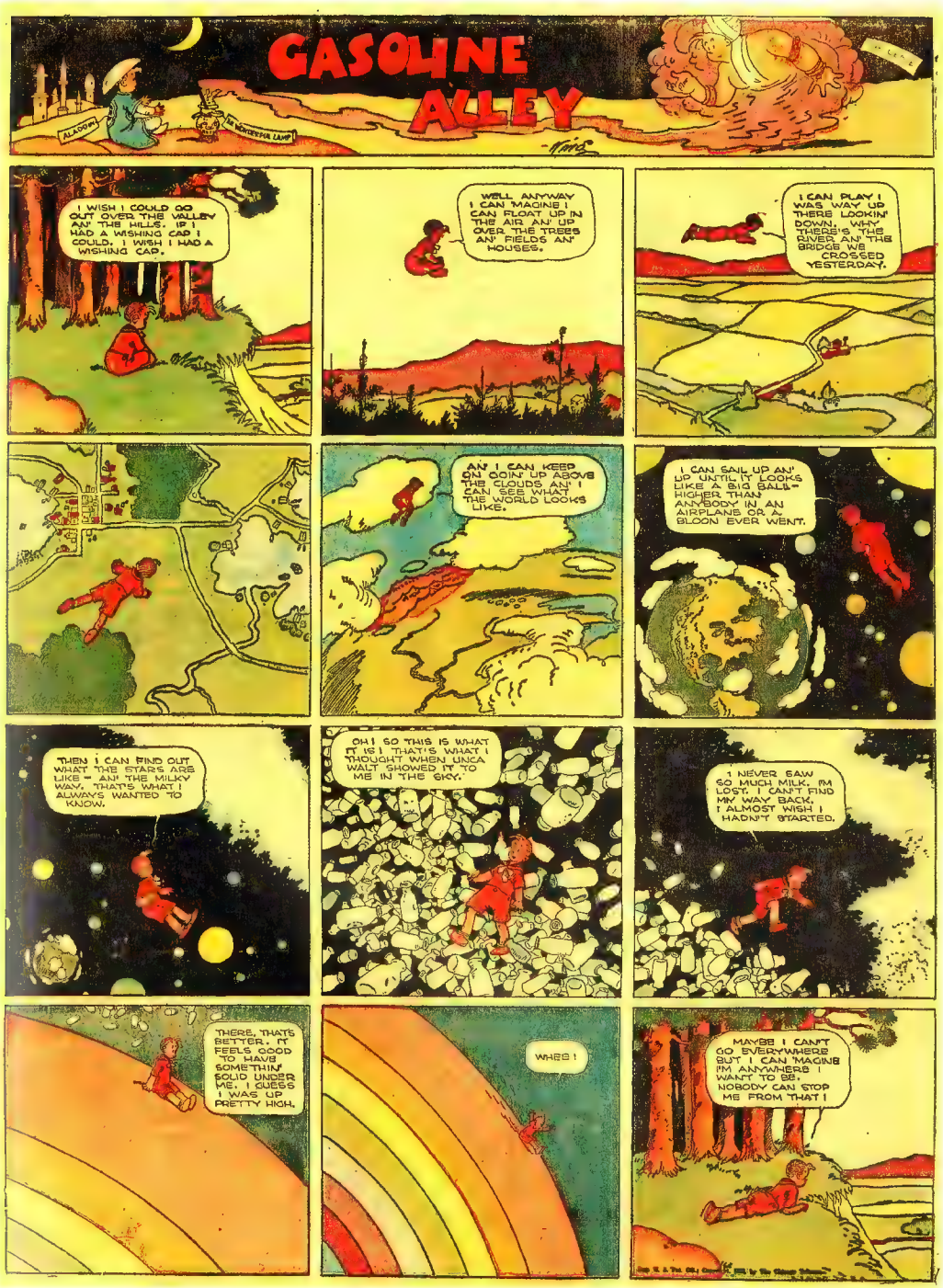
The history of the Weatherbird has been published in a little $8.95 booklet, *The Story of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch Weatherbird*, published by Virginia Publishing (4814 Washington Blvd., Suite 120, St. Louis, MO 63108; 314-367-6612). Mike Peters, who grew up in St. Louis, wrote the Foreword and emphasized the instructive importance of the Weatherbird in his career:

"I learned a lot from that Bird. It taught me the power of a cartoon to convey a message. It taught me how important a cartoon character can be to your daily routine. A great comic strip character can be like a member of your family. [And] it taught me that a cartoon no bigger than a postage stamp could convey a totally different idea and emotion every day."

These days every newspaper strip cartoonist must, of regrettable necessity, struggle with the same truth about the relationship between visual comedy and size.

And next time, if the Toonerville Trolley doesn't jump the tracks and go off in hot pursuit of the Foo-mobile, thereby out-Foxing the medium's most notable nut (known throughout the universe as Hole-man, hence the "nut" without a bolt), I'll take up the fascinating subject of which cartoonists have drawn their strips the longest. Stay 'tooned.


BETTER...BUT YOU'RE STILL GOTTA LOSE THAT HAT.
HAPPY 100TH TO THE WEATHERBIRD, FROM THE GANG FROM BEETLE BAILEY AND HI AND LOIS!
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
DAGWOOD MADE THIS IN HONOR OF YOUR 100TH BIRTHDAY!
TO THE ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH WEATHERBIRD WITH CONGRATULATIONS & ALL BEST WISHES


GASOLINE ALLEY
ALADDIN!
HIS WONDERFUL LAMP!
I WISH I COULD GO OUT OVER THE VALLEY AN' THE HILLS. IF I HAD A WISHING CAP I COULD. I WISH I HAD A WISHING CAP.
WELL ANYWAY I CAN IMAGINE I CAN FLOAT UP IN THE AIR AN' UP OVER THE TREES AN' FIELDS AN' HOUSES.
I CAN PLAY I WAS WAY UP THERE LOOKIN' DOWN. WHY THERE'S THE RIVER AN' THE BRIDGE WE CROSSED YESTERDAY.
AN' I CAN KEEP ON GOIN' UP ABOVE THE CLOUDS AN' I CAN SEE WHAT THE WORLD LOOKS LIKE.
I CAN SAIL UP AN' UP UNTIL IT LOOKS LIKE A BIG BALL— HIGHER THAN ANYBODY IN AN AIRPLANE OR A BLOON EVER WENT.
THEN I CAN FIND OUT WHAT THE STARS ARE LIKE — AN' THE MILKY WAY. THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW.
OH! SO THIS IS WHAT IT IS! THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT WHEN UNCA WALT SHOWED IT TO ME IN THE SKY.
I NEVER SAW SO MUCH MILK. I'M LOST. I CAN'T FIND MY WAY BACK. I ALMOST WISH I HADN'T STARTED.
THERE, THAT'S BETTER. IT FEELS GOOD TO HAVE SOMETHIN' SOLID UNDER ME. I GUESS I WAS UP PRETTY HIGH.
WHEE!
MAYBE I CAN'T GO EVERYWHERE BUT I CAN IMAGINE I'M ANYWHERE I WANT TO BE. NOBODY CAN STOP ME FROM THAT!

While the vast majority of **Gasoline Alley** Sunday pages concern the small-town adventures of Walt Wallet and his family, creator Frank King often took the Sunday pages on flights of fancy, in which Uncle Walt and Skeezix take imaginary journeys which were usually entertaining and educational. This one is dated October 3, 1926.

COMIC SECTION
THE DENVER POST—FIRST IN EVERYTHING—SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 10, 1932.
COMIC SECTION
GASOLINE ALLEY
by King
SEE, UNCLE WALT — M SATURATING A RUG WITH MY ANTI GRAVITY VAPOR
NOW LET'S SEE IF I HAVEN'T GOT THE SECRET OF THE OLD MAGIC CARPET.
I HATE TO TRY T WITHOUT A PARACHUTE
YOU DON'T NEED ONE.
ALL RIGHT, LET'S SEE WHERE T WILL TAKE US
GOLLY A BIG LIGHTHOUSE!
I SAW THAT WHEN I WAS IN THE NAVY. ITS CAPE HATTERAS LIGHT AND WE'RE OVER NORTH CAROLINA
AND ALONG HERE IS THE GREATEST GRAVEYARD FOR SHIPS N THE COUNTRY.
GEE!
CAN'T YOU JUST IMAGINE SIR WALTER RALEIGHS SHIP SAILING UP PIMLICO SOUND!
HE MADE THE FIRST ENGLISH SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA ON ROANOKE ISLAND IN 1585.
SEE, MARKS THE SPOT WHERE HIS FORT STOOD
THAT'S A POTTERY THAT'S THE OLE DOKI UNCLE WALT
HE'S GRINDING THE CLAY THAT THEY MOULD INTO JUGS AND JOTS AND THERE'S THE KILN THEN THE
ANYWAY WE DON'T HAVE TO CLIMB HUNDREDS OF STEPS TO SEE THE SCENERY
HERE'S A MODEL OF ONE OF THESE PROUD SHIPS DEPARTED FROM OLD ENGLAND ONCE WITH MANY BRAVE MEN ON BOARD
RALEIGH AND ANOTHER CAPITOL FOR OUR COLLECTION.
THAT PHONEY NICKEL
STOP IN THERE
AND BY AND BY A PHONEY NICKEL COMES HIM UP
GASOLINE ALLEY
AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST THIS WEEKS GASOLINE ALLEY STAMP

In this early period of Sunday strips, cartoonists often created a secondary strip which was designed to run either above (like **Colonel Potterby**, which ran above **Blondie**) or below the main strip, as this example dated July 10, 1932, featuring the weekly adventures of a 'phoney nickel' as it passed from person to person.

GASOLINE ALLEY
By King
RACHEL, IT'S ALL RIGHT TO PUT MY NAPKIN IN MY NECK WHEN I HAVE SOUP, ISN'T IT?
I DUNNO, SKEEZIX. SOME SAYS YOU OUGHTN'T TO, OTHAS SAYS YOU OUGHTN'T NOT TO.
GEE, WHIMPY, LOOK! SOMEBODY'S BUILDING A HOUSE RIGHT ON OUR BASEBALL DIAMOND.
HOW COME WE DIDN'T KNOW IT?
GOLLY, IT'S A SWELL HOLE. IT OUGHT TO BE USED FOR SOMETHIN'.
IT WOULD MAKE A KEEN SWIMMIN' POOL.
YES, OR A PLACE TO RAISE RABBITS OR SNAKES OR FROGS.
THAT'S A NIFTY BANK TO DIG A CAVE INTO, SKEEZIX.
WE CAN HIDE TREASURE IN IT, OR OF COURSE WE MAY FIND SOME.
WONDER WHOSE HOUSE IT IS. WE CAN HAVE A SECRET TUNNEL TO THEIR BASEMENT.
TOO MANY ROCKS. WE'VE GOT TO THINK UP SOMETHING ELSE.
LET'S BUILD A CAIRN OF ROCKS FOR THE OTHER KIDS TO FIND.
OF COURSE WE DUG IT, TRIXIE.
SURE, FEEL MY MUSCLE NOW!
AW, YOU DID NOT! YOU COULDN'T DO IT IN A WEEK.
WE COULD SET BASKETS AT THE END AN' PLAY BASKET BALL.
NO, LET'S MARK IT OFF IN ROOMS AN' PLAY HOUSE.
LOOK, THE OLD SPINNIN' WHEEL!
SAY! MAYBE WE COULD MAKE A ROLLER COASTER.
IT'S TURNED OFF. I TRIED IT.
THAT'S OUT. I THOUGHT WE COULD RAISE ALLIGATORS.
GOOTCH'S FATHER IS A FIREMAN MAYBE HE'D FILL IT UP WITH WATER FOR US.
YOU'D BETTER MAKE IT SNAPPY. THE WORKMEN WILL BE BACK MONDAY MORNING.
WORKMEN MAKE A LOT OF NICE THINGS.
BUT THEY NEVER HAVE ANY FUN WITH 'EM WHEN THEY GET 'EM MADE.
THEN THEY GO AHEAD AN' SPOIL 'EM FOR EVERYBODY ELSE.

Regardless of the subject, King's pages radiated goodness, warmth and the values of small-town close-knit family life. In this page dated March 25, 1934, King uses an innovative (at the time) panel layout. Frank King's **Gasoline Alley** Sunday pages are vastly underrated.

COLOR GALLERY

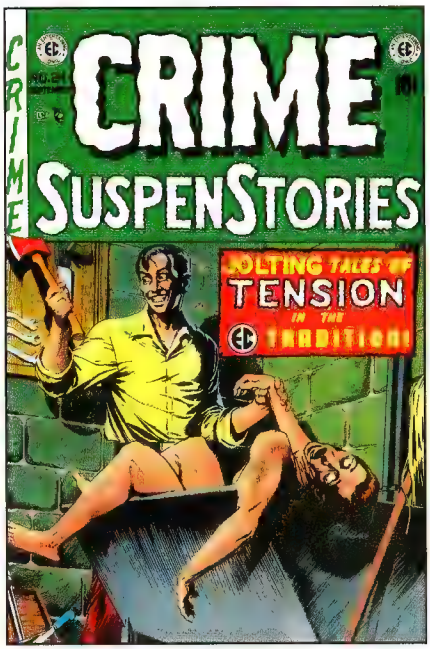
Although George Evans did not get any cover assignments from EC Comics until late in the New Trend, his covers for **Crime SuspenStories** and **Shock SuspenStories** are favorites of many EC collectors.

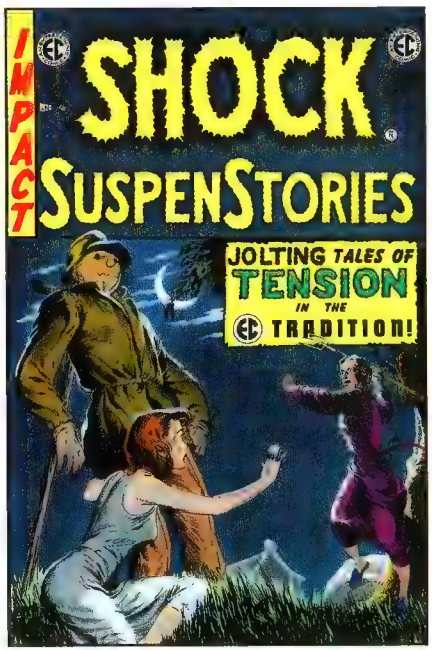
Crime SuspenStories #24 (Aug/Sep 54)

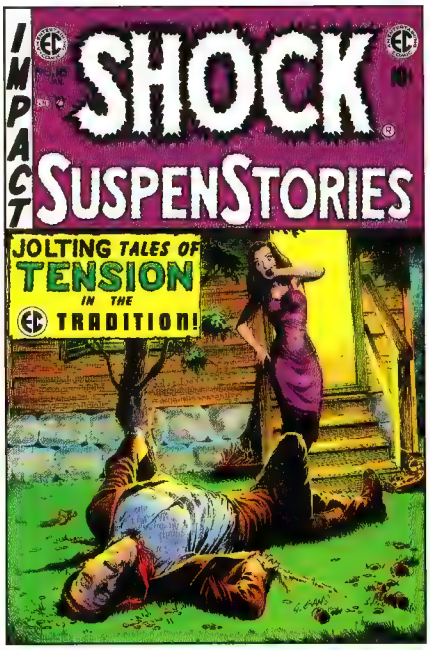
Shock SuspenStories #16 (Aug/Sep 54)

Shock SuspenStories #17 (Oct/Nov 54)

Shock SuspenStories #18 (Dec 54/Jan 55)

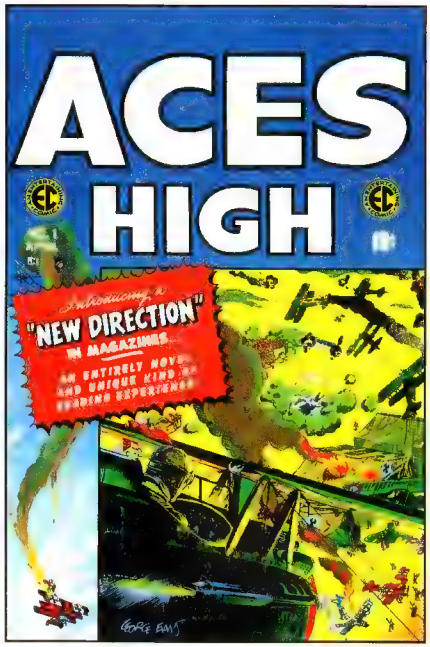


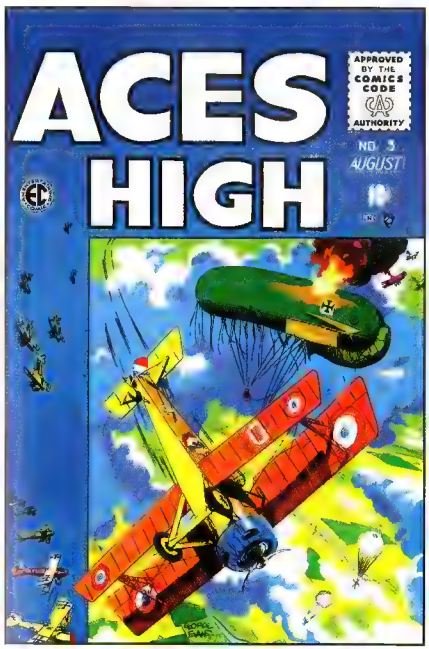




COVERS © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES AGENT, INC.

COLOR GALLERY





When George Evans got the assignment to do covers and stories for **Aces High**, he was working on his very favorite material, illustrating both World War I and World War II aircraft.

Aces High #1 (Mar/Apr 55)

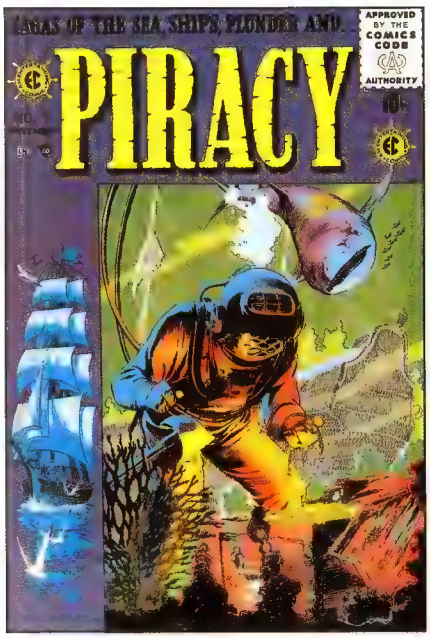
Aces High #2 (May/Jun 55)

Aces High #3 (Jul/Aug 55)

Aces High #5 (Nov/Dec 55)

COLOR GALLERY

Two-Fisted Tales #40 (Dec 54/Jan 55)
Piracy #7 (Oct/Nov 55)



Evans did only one cover for Harvey Kurtzman's **Two-Fisted Tales**, and one cover for **Piracy**, shown here.

In the photo below, **CBM** editor Russ Cochran is shown with his friend Sammy Cochran at the 1991 Atlantic City show. In order to be admitted to the convention floor, Sammy had to have a badge, so he is disguised as a well-known collector from New Jersey.

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MastroNet's Inaugural Auction

by Don Flanagan

The recently concluded Americana auction of MastroNet, Inc. set new levels for items of interest to comic collectors, as well as a wide range of eclectic items of broad interest. The first totally non-sports offering by the leading sports auction company in the world produced record results in the comic field despite there being only 107 lots directly related to comics. The section of comic books resulted in several record auction prices including:

- Detective #27 CGC VF 8.0, $278,189
- Double Action #2 CGC NM- 9.2, $35,186
- Planet Comics #1 CGC NM- 9.2, $25,557
- Superman Comics-Ashcan Edition CGC VF to NM 9.0, $36,098
- Six lots of Mile High cps (58 issues) of Shadow Comics, total $89,925
- Superboy #1 CGC VF+ 8.5, $8446
- Fantastic Four #1 CGC VF 8.0, $16,002
- Spiderman #1 (White Mountain) CGC NM 9.4, $67,304
- Fantastic Four #2 (White Mountain) CGC NM 9.4, $27,457
- Fantastic Four #5 (White Mountain) CGC NM 9.4, $17, 046
- Incredible Hulk #1-6 (5 White Mtn. Cps) CGC high grades, $31,987

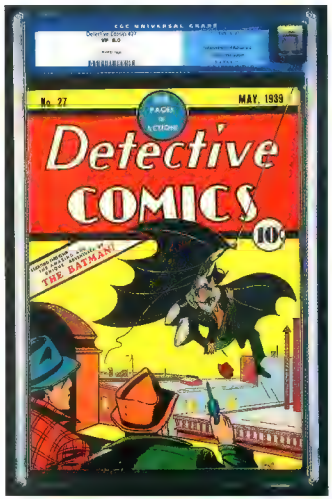
Apparently, high-grade books with pedigrees swept the field with enthusiasm and set new levels for future offerings.

The comic art in the sale also produced strong results, these and other original art and collectibles of interest to comic collectors included:

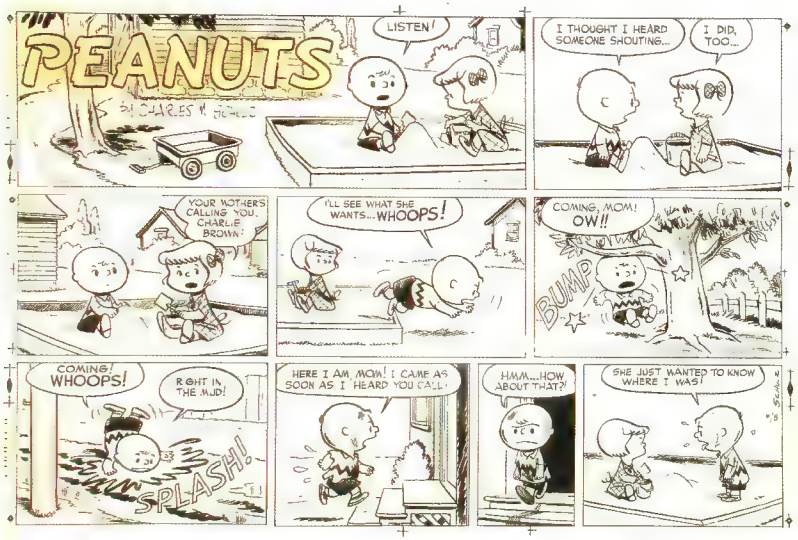
- Carl Barks "Treasure Island" painting, $67,502
- 1941 Hogarth Tarzan Sunday, $4766
- 1954 Peanuts Sunday, $17,046
- 1959 Foster Prince Valiant, $6567
- John Stanley Little Lulu cover re-creation, $3123
- Original Saturday Evening Post cover painting by Gustav Tenggren, $21,846
- 1938 Snow White Banner on linen, $6567
- 1905 Buffalo Bill poster, $11,641
- Fabulous autographed studio portrait of Tom Mix, $3515
- 8"x10" signed photo of Bela Lugosi, $3215
- Extremely rare U. S. Jones comic book premium pin, $6785
- Original masks of the Green Hornet and Kato from the TV show, $8744

Barks did three slightly different "Treasure Island" paintings. This one, in the auction, sold for $67,502.

MastroNet has established itself as one of the leading sports memorabilia auctions in the world and the recently concluded Americana auction is the first of a planned semi-annual series of new direction auctions which will include a wide range of collectible areas. While we intend to test a number of diverse areas of collectible interest, we also intend to concentrate on comic books, comic art and related toys, premiums and

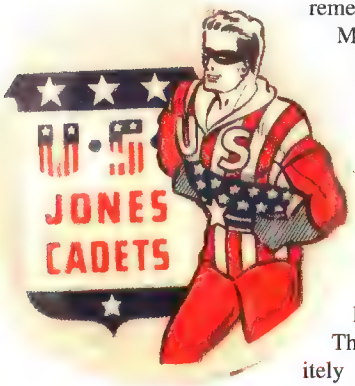


This copy of **Detective** #27 with a CGC grade of 8.0 brought a record $278,189.


PEANUTS
BY CHARLES M. SCHULZ
LISTEN!
I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMEONE SHOUTING...
I DID, TOO...
YOUR MOTHER'S CALLING YOU, CHARLIE BROWN!
I'LL SEE WHAT SHE WANTS...WHOOPS!
COMING, MOM! OW!!
BUMP
COMING! WHOOPS!
RIGHT IN THE MUD!
SPLASH!
HERE I AM, MOM! I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD YOU CALL!
HMM...HOW ABOUT THAT?
SHE JUST WANTED TO KNOW WHERE I WAS!

This very early (1954) **Peanuts** Sunday sold for $17,046.

ephemera as a primary staple in future offerings. We have already taken in more comic consignments for our Spring auction than we had in the whole Fall sale. We will be accepting quality consignments through February 2002. The response to our first auction was impressive and gratifying. The next one will be even better.



The rarest of comic book premium pinbacks, for U.S. Jones Cadets, sold for $6785.

Some of you old timers will remember me and another MastroNet vice president, Ron Oser, from the good old days in the 1970s. It must be that a love of comics and related material just stays in the blood.

The auction was conducted both online and by telephone. The lots were all exquisitely presented in a 325-page full color catalog that not only contained gorgeous photography but which also contained exhaustive descriptions of the lots. In addition to comic related items, areas of collectibles included Maxfield Parrish, Toys, Television, Autographs, Pins, Premiums, Movie Posters, Political Items, Historical Documents, Rock and Roll, Non-sport Cards, Illustration Art, Disney, Books and even three motor vehicles. Collectors of fine quality items have a great propensity for crossover and bidding patterns in this sale bore this out. The highest grossing item in the sale was the actual "Rosa Parks bus" which was bought by the Henry Ford Museum for $492,106 after spirited bidding among several institutional buyers. Other major items were: a 1920 Cox/Roosevelt jugate campaign pin, $36,043; John Dillinger's signed fingerprint card, $32,816; a crime file of Al Capone with three signatures, $36,098; a rare 1885 cigar store Indian, $54,237; a 1954 Corvette, $37,042; the original painting to Lone Ranger card #18, $5829; 1933 "King Kong" three sheet, $64,715; an original Al Hirschfeld drawing of Abbott and Costello & Laurel and Hardy, $10,189; a John Lennon guitar, $36,980; Playboy issue #1, $6559; and a 1940 Wurlitzer Jukebox model 840, $6167.

MastroNet's next scheduled Americana auction will be in May 2002. They are actively seeking quality consignments and they may be contacted through me, Don Flanagan, at 908-226-9900 or at their web site at: www.mastronet.com.

Don Flanagan is vice president of MastroNet's Americana division.

Double Action #2, with a CGC grade of 9.2, fetched $35,186.

[continued from page 33]

Binder, Carl Wessler and Jack Oleck. How did you like working from their scripts?

EVANS: Plot swipes were the name of the game. Somebody put out a book where it said there are only seven original plots in the universe. It's what you do with those seven original situations that makes the difference. I believe this is largely true, but Al and Bill were dredging up memories of stories they had read and loved, and redoing them differently. In other cases, they almost flat-out stole stories by Ray Bradbury. In fact, I was there the day Ray Bradbury called Bill on the phone and said, "I enjoyed what you did with my stories, ["Home To Stay" from *Weird Science* #13] but I didn't get a check from it."

Bill Gaines said, "But Ray, we didn't know how to get in touch with you. We did this to see if it would bring you out of the woodwork. We'd like to make a deal with you." And they did.

YOUR NAME IS CHARLES ASHLAND. YOU ARE INDEPENDENTLY WEALTHY. YOU OWN A LUXURIOUS DUPLEX APARTMENT IN THE CITY AND A COMFORTABLE SUMMER HOME ON A LARGE LAKE. YOU HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR THREE YEARS. FIVE MONTHS AGO, YOU AND YOUR BEAUTIFUL WIFE, LAURA, WERE INVOLVED IN AN UNFORTUNATE AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT. LUCKILY, LAURA ESCAPED UNHARMED. AS FOR YOU, SINCE THEN YOU HAVE BEEN CONFINED TO A WHEEL CHAIR... A HELPLESS PARALYZED INVALID. NOW YOU ARE SITTING IN THAT CHAIR, RIGIDLY, LISTENING TO LAURA'S CAUSTIC VOICE... LISTENING TO HER TAUNT YOU...
SURPRISED, AREN'T YOU, CHARLIE? YOU NEVER SUSPECTED THE TRUTH, DID YOU? WELL, NOW YOU KNOW! NOW YOU KNOW EVERYTHING! AND THIS TIME, I WON'T BOTCH THINGS UP!
LAURA! YOU WOULDN'T KILL ME... NOT LIKE THIS... NOT IN COLD BLOOD!
GEORGE EVANS

Just by reading this first panel, all of us EC fanboys knew how the story would end (see page 79).

WARDLE: Actually I read an interview with Gaines where he admitted that Bradbury caught him swiping the two stories that Gaines turned into one story.

EVANS: So you're in the know better than I am. But Bill was a decent man who treated us all [EC staff artists, writers] great until the day he died, and even now his widow, Annie, treats all of us as if we were really part of a family.

Getting back to your question, I loved Bradbury's stories, and Al's adaptations, because he knew how to keep the Bradbury feeling in his scripts. I didn't get to do many, but having read the original stories, I enjoyed re-reading Al's. So, other than Feldstein, I liked Bradbury and Binder, but Wessler and Oleck and the others, I did not like their writing. I did a lot of their scripts and I knew where they were swiped from and nobody was going to sue them. This is true of Harvey too. Don't kid yourself. Every story of Harvey's is not straight out of Harvey's mind. It was an adaptation of something that was written by the old World War I pilots, or people who wrote about them. I read a lot of them in the pulps where they were upbeat. But re-reading them by Wessler and Oleck, they wrote downbeat stuff. I didn't like the downbeat stuff, even in the horror books. I wanted to see the bad bastard punished in the end. [laughter]

WARDLE: Earlier you spoke of Bill Gaines' generosity. I've heard that as time went on, and the various reprint collections, original art auctions and movie deals came about, all of the EC regulars got part of the money in regular payments.

EVANS: That is correct. Even up to the last several weeks, his widow said that the payments would continue. They usually paid them around Christmas time, which was a nice touch too. He signed a statement that so much of the royalties would be paid to the company, so much to Russ Cochran, so much to the artists, and writers, if they were still alive, or to their heirs. It was nice to get even the smaller amount for me, because I have to pay my taxes in advance, but a couple of times the amounts that came

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through shook me up, but screwed up my tax records and the government got more than I did. It's really a shame. Some of the checks were quite large. He did it without any pressure being put on him. This was apparently something he worked out for himself and lived by.

When Woody had everything closing in on him, what with [diabetes, liver trouble and blindness] things were very tough, and Bill wired him money in advance, and more than what was expected. It didn't help a great deal as it turned out, but I think Bill Gaines was a generous, decent, kind man who dealt fairly with people and liked people.

When he died, I sent a card—not a sappy consolation card—to his wife. Instead of one of those gushy cards, I did a little sketch of the pearly gates and St. Peter and everyone standing around saying, "This is going to surprise the Hell out of a lot of people, but we've been waiting for you and you're welcome, Bill!"

WARDLE: [laughter] Oh, that's great.

EVANS: Well, that's how I feel, and I said to her, "I hope you don't think this is callous, but I think this is the sort of thing that Bill would get the biggest kick out of."

WARDLE: Oh sure. There will never be another multi-million dollar business run like that again. Whoever takes over might keep it going, but not like the feeling in the old days.

EVANS: I agree with that totally, and in support of it, when the Kefauver gang had crushed him, Bill had actually won the case and could have continued, because the law was not going to stop him.

WARDLE: They never did get anything banned.

EVANS: He said, "They tell me I'm hurting kids and I do not want to hurt kids." So, he killed the horror books, even though he didn't believe he was doing any harm. Nowadays, people like this Clive Barker, I don't think they give a damn. They'd put the kids in the meat grinder too. I am appalled at some of the stuff of his that has come out. Graphic is hardly the word, but that's neither here nor there. Bill said, "I'm going to close [the horror comics] out." He could've kept them going and I don't think he had any great hopes for [the New Direction EC titles], but he kept things going, I think, just to give us all a chance to ease into other things. That's my honest to God belief.

WARDLE: When The Senate Hearings On Juvenile Delinquency held EC horror and crime comics up for scorn, including some of your artwork [cover to *Crime SuspenStories* #23 plus the story, "The Adoption"], did you ever succumb to the feeling that maybe you were doing something wrong even though you thought you were just having fun?

EVANS: I might have, but I lived in a neighborhood where there was a whole slew of kids, kids that grew up while I was working on these horror stories, because I worked on them for Fawcett, and at Fiction House we touched on horror in "Lost World." I had two daughters who were my plug into the kids in the neighborhood, and there wasn't a bad one among them. I asked them, "How do you feel about this? You wouldn't try to imitate something like that, would you?" and they would say, "Of course not, look how stupid that is."

Getting back to what you asked me about the quality of the atmosphere at the publishers I worked for, I didn't get screwed as I was told a lot of other guys did. More luck than brains, I guess, and as I said, the times when I might have been screwed, Ev would say, "No, stick with this." I always kept other irons in the fire, and that was always a cushion. You could then decide not to take on certain assignments.

I understand Al Williamson took the same stand with Marvel recently. I patted Al on the back and said, "Atsa my boy!" Because he got a script...you know he's inking a ton of work for them recently...he said he had done some pretty rough stuff and never complained about it, but in this one he said the language and the content were just too much for him, and he said he wouldn't handle it unless they made some changes, and they did agree to make some changes. I'd say that's a plus for Al Williamson.

WARDLE: They actually did? That's unbelievable!

EVANS: To me, that is to Al's credit that he did say, "Nope, not the way it is. I'm not doing it."

As I said, Al was a big help to me when I started out in comics. After Fiction House, I worked for a short time at Better Publications, but Graham [Ingels] had left by the time I got there. I didn't like a single solitary soul there, and Al said, "You ought to go up to Fawcett's." He spent more time recommending my stuff to them than he did for himself. Al took me up to see Roy Ald, another fine, really nice man with good instincts all along. As it turned out, everyone I met at Fawcett's was the same. I loved working at Fawcett's! I would never have left them, but they went under. Roy Ald was like an older brother. He wanted me to do more penciling and put me in touch with a guy to ink. I didn't know any inkers, because I had always done my own. Roy said he had a good inker for me, and he showed me his stuff and agreed he would be good to ink my pencils. Then he said, "Well, George, I'd better tell you, he's a black guy." I said, "Geez, Roy, what the hell does that matter?" and he was relieved because he said two or three other pen-

cillers turned it down for that reason. One of them actually said to him, "Ain't no nigger touchin' my stuff." The inker was Al C. Hollingsworth, and the racist that turned him down was not that good. [Hollingsworth] would've improved his work. Just before we moved out to Long Island, I took some stuff in to King Features, and I travel in off-hours, and the subway car was pretty empty. I sat near the doors, and a tall good-looking black guy got on the train, well-dressed, carrying a portfolio. This was like thirty years later. I thought, "I know that guy, and I could see him searching his brains for my name. Then he said, "George Evans?" and I said, "Al Hollingsworth?" and there was a little reunion. He told me he had been teaching art in the New York City school system. So Al did quite well for himself, and rightly so.

Anyway, Al [Williamson] told me that EC had the same family atmosphere and nice people working there, and so that's why I started working for them. At first I worked for both, but gradually shifted to EC as Fawcett folded. Al had been showing my work around [the EC offices], pushing it over his own, if truth be known. They hired me on the spot. But even when I was working at EC, I still did stuff for aviation magazines and so on.

WARDLE: So were you not that despondent when EC collapsed? Did it affect you in a big way?

EVANS: Oh, it affected me, because that was the basic paycheck that came in regularly.

WARDLE: No, I meant more on an emotional level, because you liked the people and it was an exciting time in your life. First Fawcett going under, and then the second place where you were happy was getting out of comics.

EVANS: That aspect of it was sad, yes. To see Gaines victimized for the filthiest little political...when Kefauver died, I said no prayers for him. I hope they have a pit in Hell hot enough for him.

WARDLE: Are there any artists that you feel aren't getting their due? Any that have influenced or impressed you?

EVANS: All of the above [laughter]. I tell you, I enjoy damn near everybody's work, because there's always something to be learned. There are those, of course, who are...

WARDLE: Hacks.

EVANS: Hacks, and make no bones about it. As I said, trying to make the grade at Fiction House, doing their borders and clean-ups over guys like Bob Lubbers, John Celardo and Charlie Sultan, then [Matt] Baker's stuff would come in, I'd look at it all, learn a little bit from this, a little bit from that. They were kind enough to say, "Here's the way you handle this. Here's the way you handle that." And it was all a learning process. Of course it all began from me reading Sunday newspaper strips. At first, comic books started out by reprinting the newspaper strips, which I would read anyhow, because I adored them. I adored then, and still adore Harold Foster's work, and of course Milton Caniff and the Alex Raymond *Flash Gordon*s. There were a slew of imitators who were good too. The only drawback to me was that I thought it wasn't fair that one guy does the creative work, and somebody else cashes in on it so blatantly.

In the comic books, going back, there were guys like William Smith who went on to become a great illustrator in the big slick magazines. I don't know who published it, but one was called "Red, White and Bluey," a war-time propaganda thing, and I was absolutely stoned by it. Ogden Whitney was one of the guys that I thought was great in the early comics. I loved his stuff. There were others who didn't get signed. I found out later that Dan Barry was one and Jerry Robinson was very good. I found out who did what later when I was in the business myself.

Then, in the pulps, there were pulp artists I enjoyed, mostly aviation pulps. There was Frank Tinsely and Blakeslee and Rudolph Belarski. I still praise that stuff, because, looking back—and there was a lot of it—it was damn good stuff. Good line illustrations, and they all painted as well, did the covers. That was what I hoped to do myself.—get into that sort of thing. And I guess there was N.C. Wyeth, who was everybody's idol at the time, and there were others who had gone through the same school as him, but I guess he was the most famous. Maxfield Parrish was another, but I couldn't dream of aspiring to the heights they reached. If I had made it into the pulps and done covers...

WARDLE: You would've been happy with that.

EVANS: I would have been, yes.

WARDLE: Did you ever know the artist Everett Raymond Kinstler?

EVANS: Oooo, boy! Am I glad you brought that up. You bet your life! He was sort of a contemporary with me in the days when I was doing a lot of comics, and I'd look at his work, and it looked so easily produced, I almost hated him! If he sat down with a blank sheet of paper and took a pen and said, "They want a picture of Wild Bill Hickok" or something, while he's maybe spooning up his lunch with his left hand, he's doing this stuff with the right. Not that it looked sloppy. He just made it look so easy. It was done with such great facility, that...

GEORGE EVANS

WARDLE: He's one of the unsung artists of the Golden Age, and one of the finest artists of any age.

EVANS: These days, he's doing portraits of presidents and sports figures and great statesmen and all kinds of important people. He has a book out, *Painting Portraits*, which I have, and I read and re-read, and I think back to the one time that I met Everett Raymond Kinstler. He had come up in the comics business at the same time I had. EC had folded and I went over to *Classics [Illustrated*, also known as Gilberton], because they were about the only ones that still looked likely to be able to hang on, and I sat in the waiting room waiting to talk to Alex Blum, the editor. He was a very good man. And there was another fellow sitting there with a portfolio whom I guessed was waiting to see Mr. Blum too. Well, we got to talking, and later he asked my name and I asked his. He told me he needed this job because he was still studying. He told me, "I don't plan to spend my whole life scratching away at the comics, and I hope you don't plan that either." (In 1999, I interviewed the great Everett Raymond Kinstler on the phone, where he spoke from his home in Connecticut. Kinstler doesn't recall meeting Evans but said the quote did sound like something he would've said at the time, yet hastens to add that, "I never looked down on the work I did as a comic book artist. That is really where I come from. I think what might have triggered that [remark] is that I had a desire to go further into illustration, and he [Evans] must have been saying the same thing, because comics were going through a terrible transition, where artists like me found it very hard to make a living. They were sanitizing comics a great deal. So if I said that to him, it was not a putdown of comics.")

Well of course comics have come a long way. It was at that point we introduced ourselves. He obviously had seen what I did and I saw what he did, and when I found out it was Everett Raymond Kinstler, I thought, "This is the guy that I sort of regard as a goal for comic book artists." I should've followed his advice, but hell, I couldn't! He obviously was going to fit into the fine art set. I never would have.

I have a painting in the Air Force art collection and I've done aviation book illustrations and that sort of thing, and I get an invitation every year to go to a black tie and tuxedo affair each year at the Air Force.

Oh, we musn't forget this. To me, the real god of the comics is Roy Crane, in every way. He chose the cartoonists' way, but he had the art ability that all the others had as well. The whole concept of comics storytelling...adventure stuff...has its roots in Roy Crane.

WARDLE: In *Wash Tubbs*?

EVANS: In *Wash Tubbs*. It began as a gag a day strip, but you can tell he was never quite comfortable with it. Once he got into the adventure scene, he was great. They give all the credit to Milton Caniff, but Caniff himself said that everything that went into the *Terry and the Pirates* strips, he had seen in Roy Crane's work. And it is true. You can see it.

Add to that list of people I admire, the name and work of Will Eisner. I guess it was Eisner and Iger at some point, when I was at Fiction House, who were a team.

WARDLE: And they supplied all the best talent.

EVANS: I think Eisner was most of it. I've met Jerry Iger at different cons and I gather that he was more the business end of it and Eisner was the creative end. When I met Iger, he was no longer in the business, but when I was at Fiction House, people who knew him had a very different picture of him. I never heard anyone knock Will Eisner, but there were those who didn't like Jerry Iger. I once had a chance to meet Will Eisner at John Hitchcock's convention in North Carolina. I intended to go, but I came down with an ailment. I needed to have a cyst removed from my lower back, so sitting on a train for long hours was painful and I had to pass it up. I was really looking forward to meeting Will Eisner and shaking his hand.

WARDLE: You also did some stuff for *National Lampoon* in the 1970s. How did that come about?

EVANS: They called and asked if I would be interested in doing it. They had been doing these satires. I had seen some of them, and they wanted it done in the style of the actual comics they were satirizing. They had written it specifically for my art style. There was at least one that I had the impression was intended for Frank Springer.

I've always been picky about who I like, as you can tell. When I was at EC, they had polls in the letters pages for readers to vote for their favorite stories in each issue. I guess it was Graham Ingels that was most liked in the horror books and Wally Wood in the science-fiction. I always got place or show, as you might call it, for storytelling, because to me that's what it's all about. You can do fine pictures, but if they don't proceed to tell your story, they don't belong there.

WARDLE: Were there some artists at EC that even you guys looked up to? There were so many great artists working there.

EVANS: I think most of them felt that way about Reed Crandall. Everybody would make a comment about Reed. I look at the stuff I did for EC and the only stuff I'm remotely satisfied with is the aviation stuff.

WARDLE: Really! I think your art in *Haunt of Fear* and *Crime SuspenStories* and such was incredible.

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EVANS: I think I overworked the hell out of it. I recently saw some of the stuff I did for Fawcett reprinted, and I thought I did better work for them. I think I just tried too hard at EC and packed the panels with needless crap. [laughter]

WARDLE: One thing you used to do in the middle of a story was to have something like "A. Williamson and Co." appear on a store window, or on a dark street when a killer is loose, right in the middle of a tense sequence, there would be an ad for "Williamson's Hair Tonic".

EVANS: [laughter] Yes, sometimes I would do that.

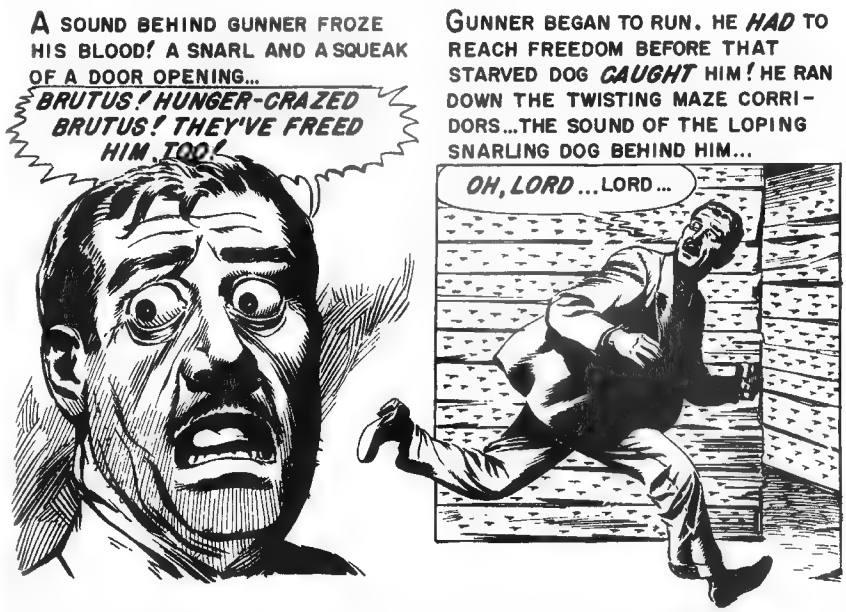
WARDLE: When I saw that, I figured you must have enjoyed kidding around with each other and must have been friends.

EVANS: You know, I still do it with the *Corrigan* strip. Every once in a while, I'll stick in an "in" joke.

WARDLE: The best inside joke was "The Success Story" in the first issue of *Creepy*, where Williamson drew the lead figure to look like him, the writer who was drawn like Archie Goodwin, the inker who was Angelo Torres, the letterer...

EVANS: That wasn't Al that was being lampooned there. Al used his own face probably to soften the bite of the indictment—which is really what it was by a group of talented guys who are misused, and obviously, most unpleasantly so. Even though Al drew the baddie to look like himself, that was about the guy who "drew" *Dan Flagg*. He [Don Sherwood] had previously worked for George Wunder on *Terry and the Pirates*, which he took over for Milton Caniff. This was before I went to work with George Wunder, but when the flap about *Dan Flagg* touched so many in comics, George called, laughing, "[Sherwood] did my coloring book and was reliable at bringing in coffee. His wife was marvelous at research, editing and typing, and was the best assistant I had."

Sherwood had a rich relative who apparently financed the production of *Dan Flagg* for the first couple of months. Dan Flagg was a gung-ho major fighting America's wars all around the globe, a real right-wing, patriotic type of story. The first parts of it were art swipes from Alex Raymond's *Rip Kirby*, and as the schedule hit him, producing strips seven days a week plus the story, he began to hire other people to do it. These included Al Williamson, Alden McWilliams, myself and I think Wally Wood. He hired a whole slew of people and it turned out, as we talked with each other that that's what was happening. He was buying the story, buying the art and everything else, but his name was signed very large and clear on all these strips.


A SOUND BEHIND GUNNER FROZE HIS BLOOD! A SNARL AND A SQUEAK OF A DOOR OPENING...
BRUTUS! HUNGER-CRAZED BRUTUS! THEY'VE FREED HIM, TOO!
GUNNER BEGAN TO RUN. HE HAD TO REACH FREEDOM BEFORE THAT STARVED DOG CAUGHT HIM! HE RAN DOWN THE TWISTING MAZE CORRIDORS...THE SOUND OF THE LOPING SNARLING DOG BEHIND HIM...
OH, LORD ...LORD...

From "Blind Alleys," the terrified bad guy runs through a maze lined with thousands of razor blades, chased by a big, half-starved dog.

WARDLE: So this is a story that actually happened to you.

EVANS: Actually happened. The guy was a real pain in the ass.

WARDLE: What about the part in "The Success Story" where Baldo says "I'll have the next script done as soon as I finish ruling these panel borders? Did he really lie to the freelancers and let them think he was doing everything else?

EVANS: Yes! It was passed off as his strip. He never said to me, "I had Al Williamson do this. I had Alden McWilliams do that." So, seeing the thing, I would look at it for a while and notice that this strip, which at the beginning looked so

much like Alex Raymond's stuff, which I admired, suddenly had this really good art [but different from the Raymond swipes]. There was a sequence when the character went to Mongolia and I thought, "Why did he suddenly switch to copying Al Williamson?" But it wasn't copying. It was Al Williamson.

WARDLE: It's a wonder you couldn't spot Williamson's art right off the bat. You were so familiar with it.

EVANS: But when somebody imitates someone else closely, but signs his name, you wouldn't think anything of it. Al hadn't said anything and it wasn't until years later [1964] that each of us compared notes and found out that we had all contributed. This is not unusual.

WARDLE: I've even heard that Al Capp for years denied that Frazetta ghosted *Li'l Abner*. And he did it for, what, nine years?

EVANS: Yes, he did it for a long time. All the advertisements for *Abner*, I hear, were by [Frazetta]. Well Bob Lubbers worked with Capp on it for a while too. He produced a hell of a lot of Li'l Abner stuff and I guess at a given point, he announced that he wanted to leave, and Capp or his brother Eliott, wrote the script for *Long Sam*. Remember *Long Sam*? She was a very tall, beautiful woman who was the protagonist. Bob did it for a long time. It was very popular apparently. But then the story strip began to fade. ["The Success Story"] was almost totally true except for the ending [laughter].

When the magazine *Creepy* came out, they had asked a lot of us EC men to contribute. I did an aviation story which was tailor-made for me. Al Micale helped me with it because I didn't have time to finish it. I said to [James] Warren, "I'd like to write a story for you and call it 'The Ultimate Horror Story.'"

You'd have a kid like me when I was that age reading horror pulps, and his parents always haranguing at him about this stuff rotting his mind. He becomes addicted to it. And when they begin making a flood of horror movies, he goes time and time again to the movie theater and his parents continue to harangue at him. Then he gets married, and his wife starts in on him about the stuff he reads and watches and listens to on the radio. Then, the war breaks out and he gets drafted and gets up on the front lines with his buddies. The enemy opens fire with flamethrowers, bazookas, rockets, machine gun fire and poison gas and he gets killed in the battle. Then his family hails him as a hero. "What is the ultimate horror?"

WARDLE: War.

EVANS: Of course.

WARDLE: Why didn't you do this story?

EVANS: [laughter] Warren said, "Come on! What are you trying to do? They'll damn us as a pacifist magazine!"

WARDLE: I guess it seemed too much like you were trying to get back at the people who wanted to ban horror comics, and because it was the first attempt at regrouping the EC horror artists, he was wary of doing it.

EVANS: In any case, he said that wasn't what he had in mind. Anyway, the assault troops for censorship are still around, still sure they are right. Now they have different targets. One of their biggest targets now is television. The TV industry in the 1950s egged on the attack on the "evil" horror comics. Now that they are the ones on the firing line, they don't like it one bit.

HEH, HEH! IN THE LAST ISSUE OF THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE OLD WITCH TOLD YOU FIENDS A GRIM FAIRY TALE! THEN, IN HER OWN MAG, THE HAUNT OF FEAR, SHE TOLD YOU A SECOND! THEN THE CRYPT-KEEPER SWIPED THE IDEA, AND HE TOLD YOU ONE IN HIS MAG, TALES FROM THE CRYPT! SO, I'M NOBODY'S FOOL! I KNOW A GOOD THING! HERE'S MY GRIM FAIRY TALE! I CALL THIS CHILDISH-CHILLER...
FOR HOW THE BELL TOLLS!
Fairy Tales
GEORGE EVANS

To keep the identity of the character consistent, virtually all of Evans' Vault-Keeper splashes used a Johnny Craig pasteover for VK's face. Here is a rare exception.

ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

Don McGregor

Reminiscences of a Fearless Creator

By Bill Baker

Don McGregor had a career writing for Warren and then Marvel before he set out on the road to creator-ownership. Within fan circles he was already famous for his work on Killraven with P. Craig Russell in the pages of Amazing Adventures *and Black Panther in the pages of* Jungle Action. *Then he made a stand that he, the writer, ought to have more control of his work. What came next was his collaboration with artist Paul Gulacy,* Sabre, *published by Eclipse. It ranks as one of the very first American graphic novels. He followed that up with another graphic novel,* Detectives, Inc.: A Remembrance of Threatening Green *(illustrated by Marshall Rogers) and a mini-series,* Detectives, Inc.: A Terror of Dying Dreams *(illustrated by Gene Colan), both also published by Eclipse. After working on it for years, McGregor recently completed work on his* Detectives, Inc. *feature film.* CBM*'s Bill Baker spoke with McGregor about his work.*

Comic Book Marketplace: Don, you recently premiered the *Detectives, Inc.* film at the Comic Con International-San Diego. Why don't you give us a quick rundown of the creation and history of the series first?

Don McGregor: It has a long, complicated, convoluted history. It actually goes back to my teen years. When I was about sixteen, I'd started using my dad's 8 mm Bolex camera to make my own private eye or Bond type spy movies. And I realized one thing, Bill, if you wrote the movie, and if you directed it, and if you starred in the film, you always won the fights. It didn't matter how big the people were, how many of them were against you. And people would say, "Well, Don, we can kill you! We could kick the crap out of you!" And I'd say, "Yeah. I know that. And you know that. We all know that. But, see, in the script, it says I win. So, here's how we're going to do it!"

And even better than that, Bill, you always get the girl! [General laughter] And so, realizing this, I decided to dedicate my life to this. This was infinitely better than real life.

And I loved to do my own stunts. I was really a fan of stunt people like Dave Sharpe, Jock Mahoney and Yakima Canutt. Although I never had enough sense to use fake knives and things like that, who knew where you got stuff like that, if it even existed in the state of Rhode Island! We used the real thing. [Laughter] And sometimes some of the people you were doing those stunts with weren't as...careful as they should have been, perhaps.

Around about that time I met Alex Simmons, in the late sixties. And this brings us to *Detectives, Inc.*, because originally they were created as characters for Alex Simmons and me to play on the screen, so that we didn't always have to play against each other. We did a lot of these small, silent

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films where we played against each other because we loved to do the stunts, and because we both trusted each other. We knew what we were doing could get us hurt real quick, if we changed what we had choreographed. In one film, Alex has me on my back, over a waterfall, choking the living daylights out of me! There's actually a film where Alex swings an ax at my head, I duck underneath it, and the blade chocks into a tree over my head! A lot of people who know this think this is evidence that I'm certifiable. But I wouldn't have done that stunt with anybody but Alex. You can get into trouble real quick! And it's not fun anymore! It might still look cool on film, though, so always make sure you get the shot!

We had a lot of fun doing the fight sequences, but we wanted to do something where we could kind of play off each other, and so that was the original inspiration for doing Denning and Rainier. Right around that time I also figured out..., I had been going to comic conventions, which is where I met Alex, and I said, "You know, when we go to the next Phil Seuling comic con, we should put our own comic together." Because at that time, Alex was drawing. Maybe he still draws, but he writes more these days. So I said, "We'll do a *Detectives, Inc.* comic." And we did, and we took it to the convention.

CBM: So *Detectives, Inc.* actually began as a comic?

McGREGOR: It actually ended up becoming a comic first, the 1969 version. Even though I wrote the script for the movie before I wrote the comic, for some reason I can't recall, we never got around to filming it. By the early '70s, I moved to New York to start working at Marvel comics, so I never actually filmed that film. And then I got involved in writing the Black Panther, and Killraven, and working on staff at Marvel, and so that kind of went by the wayside. But it was always in my head, that I would love to do something with *Detectives, Inc.* I wasn't able to continue a comic on Rainier and Denning, either. When I was doing the Panther and Killraven and those books, it was taking up more time than I actually probably had. [Laughter] You know, I'd be coming home from staff, about 9 o'clock at night, and sitting behind the typewriter, I was lucky if I got two pages done a night. I was sometimes lucky if I got one done. They were regular books, and they had deadlines that had to be continually met, and I was trying to put everything I had into those books.

CBM: Is that just a genre that interested you all along?

McGREGOR: Oh, absolutely. I grew up loving all those private eye shows like *77 Sunset Strip*, *Bourbon Street Beat*, *Peter Gunn*. But *Detectives, Inc.* obviously owes a great debt to Robert Culp and Bill Cosby in *I Spy*. It certainly had a vast impact on *Detectives, Inc.* in the terms of the friendship of the two lead guys.

CBM: But it seems, at least to me, that *Detectives, Inc.* doesn't necessarily emulate what might be seen as typical attributes of a lot of detective fiction. There is a strong sense of dark currents and noir, as well as mystery and personal danger in the mix, but not in the typical, hard-nosed sense. Were you trying to create something new, or did this all just seem to come natural?

McGREGOR: Well, those characters come very natural to me. When the chance came to do the first *Detectives, Inc.* graphic album, it was very early in the independent publishing [movement]. I think it was the fourth graphic album that Eclipse had done, and it took two years to produce 46 pages. So, obviously, I was going to do this thing about private eyes, and it would be a murder mystery, but I didn't want it to be just a murder mystery. I wanted to use the elements of a murder mystery, and the investigation of that murder, but I didn't want it to overshadow the people or Denning and Rainier. This was always supposed to be about the characters and the people they meet. So it was a determination very early on that the focus would always be on the characters and what they experienced.

And the great thing about doing the private eye genre is that the private eye is able to go into any class structure, and any place. They are involved in one thing: Investigating the case and finding out the truth. And often times they're the catalyst to even provoke things to explode further, just by their very presence and the very fact that they're trying to find out what really happened. And they are going to encounter people at volatile moments in their lives, some

--AND I LOGGED ENOUGH HOURS WITH WEAPONS WHEN WE WERE IN THE ARMY THAT I SHOULD BE AS USED TO IT AS DRIVING A CAR.
BUT ITS WEIGHT ALWAYS SCARES ME.
I DON'T GET MY ROCKS OFF FIRING IT. AND I NEVER FORGET HOW REAL IT IS--
--NEVER LULLED INTO TV'S BLOOD-LESS REALITY OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER.

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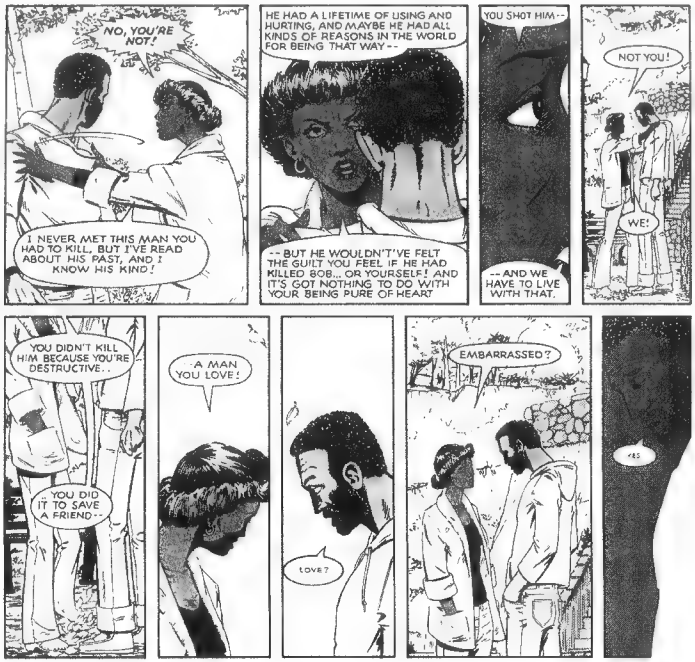
with very dark and potentially violent secrets, certainly many with secrets who don't want those secrets made public or revealed to those around them! And so they have very, very strong reasons to be provoked into further action, perhaps violent action, and the private eye genre allows you to examine all that.


NO, YOU'RE NOT!
I NEVER MET THIS MAN YOU HAD TO KILL, BUT I'VE READ ABOUT HIS PAST, AND I KNOW HIS KIND!
HE HAD A LIFETIME OF USING AND HURTING, AND MAYBE HE HAD ALL KINDS OF REASONS IN THE WORLD FOR BEING THAT WAY--
-- BUT HE WOULDN'T'VE FELT THE GUILT YOU FEEL IF HE HAD KILLED BOB... OR YOURSELF! AND IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR BEING PURE OF HEART
YOU SHOT HIM--
-- AND WE HAVE TO LIVE WITH THAT.
NOT YOU!
WE!
YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM BECAUSE YOU'RE DESTRUCTIVE..
YOU DID IT TO SAVE A FRIEND--
A MAN YOU LOVE!
LOVE?
EMBARRASSED?
YES

CBM: It's amazing how long, and how vital this series is among fans despite the simple fact that—and, again, no insult or judgment intended here—how few stories have actually seen print.

McGREGOR: It has always amazed me. On the website, www.donmcgregor.com, for instance, I know on the letters page somebody wrote there hasn't been a week that's gone by that they haven't thought of the first *Detectives, Inc.: A Remembrance of Threatening Green* and what it meant to them. I had a woman write that she was ready to commit suicide and [then] read that book, and decided not to. When readers respond with such profound emotional empathy, it has a profound effect upon you. I'm glad there's been such love for these guys. And yet having to accomplish that identification with them in 46 pages for the first book, to try to let the readers know what I knew about them was intimidating. I had to pull it off in that amount of space, capture them, as well as the people they met. That there's this passion, and a passionate response, to Denning and Rainier is..., well, it means very much to me, and I'm glad there's people out there that these guys mean as much to as they do to me.

CBM: Well, why don't we talk about that first story for a bit? How did you work with Marshall Rogers on that? Did you tend to do full scripts?

McGREGOR: Oh yeah. Totally. And then Marshall took them and he..., [Laughter] you know, we had, again, 46 pages, and I was squeezing a lot of story into 46 pages. Oftentimes, I look back on that book and I think it was more a matter of what wasn't going to get into the book. There were scenes that I just had to keep cutting. As opposed to the next *Detectives, Inc.: Remembrance*..., that book had a lot of small panels in it. I wrote a lot of panels on the page. But Marshall would put even more [in there]. I would want a certain kind of continuity from panel to panel, he would give me that and add to the flow by putting even more panels to accomplish that effect.

There's a sequence where Denning and Rainier are first together, and Rainier is getting dressed, and he's rambling [on] about his life, and he's stumbling around, he's trying to get his pants on, and falling over, all while this dialogue's going

on. And Marshall just captured it beautifully. He caught the entire awkward physicality. I wanted the scene to have humor and a flow of movement as well as a forlorn current, a complex mixture, and Marshall captured all the nuances.

There's one sequence where Rainier's with his ex-wife, and they're sitting in a restaurant, and they're both having memories of the time when they were married. So Rainier has one, Rita has another, and then there's one where what they're talking about evokes the same memory in both of them. In the script I have a flashback playing out, and then there's another flashback. Marshall went even a step further with that, and took it where he had the two flashbacks going on simultaneously! [General laughter] It was a hell of a trick! An ambitious thing to try to pull off, and he did a great job on it.

And one of my favorite scenes to this day I think I've ever done in comics was, again, a very difficult and tricky one to pull off so that the reader would know exactly what was going on, and could track it. There's a sequence where Rainier goes out to Sunken Meadow Park with a woman whose lover has been murdered. And they're walking along the shoreline, down a sandy slope from the parking lot—all of the places in *Detectives, Inc.* stories actually exist; so I had photographs for Marshall so he'd know exactly what the places looked like. The woman is talking to Rainier about how much she loved this woman, and what happened, and Rainier in the meantime is fantasizing. He can't get past the fact that she's a lesbian. At first, he's having very classic male fantasies of lesbians together. That then evolves into his ex-wife being with another woman, then evolves into her new male lover, and then Rainier sees himself leaping in between them in a classic hero fashion. He's got all these fantasies going on, and they run across three pages. And they walk up the hillside and they walk right up into the background [of those fantasies]. Ruth now says something to Rainier like, "So, what do you think?" And of course he really hasn't heard anything she's said! [General laughter] And it's such a small, human, little moment. He goes, "Uhm...uhm..." and he has to admit that he hadn't heard much of what she'd told him at all. And the fact that we captured that in a comic book, and pulled it off, that's just one of those little treasures, for me, that it exists, and that we did it.

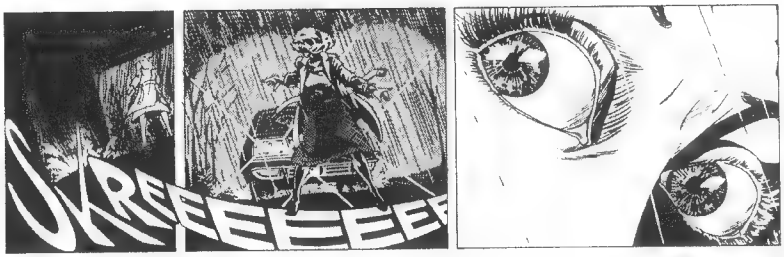
CBM: Oh, it's one of those moments that really does stick in your mind, and it is amazing, and a real tribute to your combined skills as storytellers, that you two could pull it off...

McGREGOR: I think many people can relate to it. We've all had moments where people are talking and we've half heard what they're saying, you know?

See, these were actually based on the first *Detectives, Inc.* stories I wrote in like '69, or 1970. In the first story, Denning has to end up killing somebody to save Rainier. That's the one that Alex drew that we took to the Phil Seuling comic con in 1970. But that story was situated on a college campus, and it made a lot of sense [since] there was a lot of stuff going around college campuses [back then]. I always wanted to keep the idea of Denning having to shoot somebody, and not wanting to take a human life, and having to take a teenager's life. But, like I said, I probably started to write [the comics version of] *Detectives, Inc.* that the world would come to know in 1979. But what the hell was going on on college campuses? Nothing! So that didn't seem to be a vital thing to write about, and I changed it to the rooftops of the South Bronx. The second storyline, written in 1970 before my published work, "The Night They Died," which had a few pages drawn, but was never finished, and never saw print, had Rainier's wife hiring him to be a bodyguard to her new lover, but a lot of the story was rooted in the Vietnam war. Well, ya know, I had just come off two books—Black Panther and Killraven—that dealt with war. And even *Sabre* dealt with revolution to some extent. And I thought, "I've handled about as much as I want of war at this point in time. I really want to write about something else." And so I actually had the idea of the lesbian characters, one who's a midwife and has been murdered, so she's hiring him for that case.

CBM: How did you go about adapting the *Detectives, Inc.* story for film, or the process of restoring it to its original format as a screenplay?

McGREGOR: Good question. Actually what happened with *Detectives, Inc.: Terror of Dying Dreams*, I wrote the screenplay first. I was scheduled to do another *Detectives, Inc.* graphic album, but it wasn't *A Terror of Dying Dreams*; it was going to be a story called *A Horror of Burning Places*, and it was going to be about the bombing of abortion clinics. When the opportunity came to do the movie, I realized, of course, there was no way I was going to be able



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to go around blowing up buildings. [Laughter] This just couldn't happen, so I had to find a subject matter that it was feasible for me to be able to film.

And I was channel surfing one night, and I came across some kind of news thing on domestic violence. I heard some statistics on the number of battered women, and [I said to myself], "What the hell?!" I took some notes and I started doing some preliminary research, and that became the beginning of *A Terror of Dying Dreams*, and evolved into the story it was going to be for [the movie].

But there were a lot of people who also thought I was very, very crazy to be doing this, because it was a 130-page movie script. Movie scripts normally break down into about a minute per page on film, and, boy, that was certainly the case with this [movie]. But I'm a storyteller, and I wanted to tell a story with these characters. I knew as a comic book writer, I couldn't just go into Hollywood and say, "Hey, I want to do a movie based on these characters I created," [and get anywhere]. But if I could show them that I was capable of going on location, filming, and putting the story together, maybe I'd have more of a shot. There were times when I thought, "Yes. The people are absolutely right. I was out of my mind to try this!" [Laughter]

Because most of the actors—almost all the actors, I think, except for Alex—were not familiar with the comics at all, and I think they really saw comics as a second rate medium as much of the outside world does. So I remember at the first cast reading, a lot of the actors [asked], "How can you go from doing a comic script to doing a movie script?" Well, to be honest with you, the movie script is easier. I mean, you write the scenes and you don't have to really be that detailed about what the performers are doing. In the comics medium, you normally have a very set amount of comic pages, and you've got to find a way to get that material into an effective format. Very seldom can you get extra pages, although I've managed to whine and wheedle at times, and in some cases by pleading, "Please, please, please! I just need...!" [Loud general laughter] But, normally, with comics your page count is pretty much set in cement. The thing with film is if you find the scene is running long you can pretty much edit it down. And, when you're writing a comic page, if there's a long dialogue scene you have to really know specifically what the stage play is, so there's a continuous sense of movement. The artist needs to know what these characters are doing and experiencing emotionally during the dialogue.

When you're working with an artist like Gene Colan [who] is very, very good at capturing the subtleties of facial expressions, and body language, and interaction between people. It's one of the things I really, really love working with him. I held on to Ragamuffins for years because he was the only artist I believed in that time period could capture what I wanted from the 1950s, the next couple decades, and eventually from earlier decades, but also be knowledgeable about how those kids would look, would see into their eyes, capture their expressions. And I knew all the visuals revolve around small, human things. There's a

sequence that sums that up. Little Randy's five years old, he's going for his first day to Kindergarten, and his mother's taking him across Main Street, holding his hand, and she's giving him all these instructions. "Don't do this, do that." And then, as soon as she turns her back to go into the house, and he turns around I had in the instructions to Gene, "What I want to see on this kid's face when he turns around is that anything is possible." There's no restrictions anymore. And Gene nails it in that one panel. Those are the moments where all the battles, all the times you went through [wondering,] "Oh, God, how am I going to pay rent next month?", those are the moments where you go, "God, I love comics. Isn't this great? Let's do this again!" [General laughter]

I may have gotten off the main topic of the question you asked, Bill. [More general laughter]

YEAH WELL...
THE DAYS GET AWAY FROM YOU WHAT'VE YOU BEEN DOING THE LAST MONTH?
THE USUAL. A LITTLE HUSTLING AROUND YOU LIVED WITH A FREELANCE ARTIST LONG ENOUGH... YOU KNOW WHAT THE ROUTINE IS LIKE
HOW'S THE PRIVATE EYE BIZ?
WE'RE DETECTIVES, DAD. INVESTIGATORS.
NOT PRIVATE EYES.
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU WANT TO CALL IT, TED. YOU CAN CALL IT GODDAMNED SHERLOCK HOLMES, IF YOU WANT.
--BUT THAT'S STILL ONE STRANGE PROFESSION YOU GOT YOURSELF IN.

CBM: No problem!

McGREGOR: When the time came to do the comic version of the Detectives Inc. movie script, it was really very difficult because I was locked in, again, to a certain number of pages. I've done comics adaptations of other films, and now I was having to do it with one of my own, and I didn't find it any easier. In fact, because we only had 72 pages, it really meant that for every two pages of movie script, I had one page of comic to play around with. I think one of the interesting things for the readers, and the viewers, is that there are things in the comic that aren't in the movie, and then there are things in the movie that aren't in the comic.

But at one point before we had 72 pages, I think it was a sixty-some count, it just looked like I wasn't going to have the room to do the big Coney Island Boardwalk scene when Rainier and Deirdre talk about their past relationships. And that scene was just so very dear to me, I remember calling Dean Mullaney up saying, "Dean, I don't care if I have to pay Gene Colan to draw these pages," and I could scarcely afford to do such a thing, "I'll pay Gene out of my own pocket. I don't know how I'll do it, but I will never be able to live with this book if I can't have that Boardwalk scene in there." And I definitely couldn't do it in the page count that we had; there was just too much plot material that had to come afterwards. Dean Mullaney found a way for me to do it, get the extra pages in there, and to this day, it's still one of my favorite scenes that I've ever done in comics.

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Terrorist Comics:
Make Your Choice Now!

by Jim Steranko

You're in danger!

We all are. We've watched as our beliefs, our work, our way of life, our country, and our very existence has become increasingly corrupted. The 9/11 attack on America has pushed me and probably most of you to the razor's edge of endurance for the destructive forces around us—and the people behind them.

Those who know me can confirm that I've never thought of myself as one of the good guys. But the malevolence I've seen in the recent past, culminating in the WTC tragedy, has put that perception in a different perspective.

Like many others, I'm repulsed by the plague of violence and death ravaging our nation and feel frustrated, even helpless, to combat it. I find it particularly disturbing that the artistic form with which I'm most closely identified has seemed to turn its back on the virtues upon which it was built.

Today's comics are possessed by brutality, destruction, depravity, cynicism, and obscenity. No? Here's a press release I received a few weeks ago:

> ENNIS, CONNER, PALMIOTTI TURN A TRICK! August 19: Ever wonder what it would be like to sleep with a super-powered prostitute? Garth Ennis has and he's enlisted Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti to flesh out the story in *Pro*, a 64 page one-shot coming next summer from Image. Following the announcement on the "Image All Stars" panel at WizardWorld, Palmiotti told the *Splash*, "This will probably keep the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund very busy for the next five years. It's the world's first super-hero prostitute and pretty much every comic book character's run in with her. It's done Garth style so it won't be the actual characters, but it'll be like mainstream super-hero comics with a prostitute thrown in the mix. It's evil, it's gonna be worse than Hitler's testicles. It's Garth, which guarantees its madness. It's Amanda, so it's a woman drawing this evil stuff, which makes it even more evil. And then it's me and I usually like trouble anyway." Conner and Palmiotti signed at the CBLDF table on Saturday afternoon to start building the war chest.

If this is supposed to be funny, I'm not laughing. Are some of the most-publicized talents in the field so desperate they've turned to celebrating evil? Apparently so. They obviously think of themselves as cultural terrorists and want the world to know they've allied themselves with evil. They're welcome to it.

Personally, I'm sick of evil, particularly the psychotic, nihilistic garbage that's pitched as entertainment and has signaled the twilight of the comics era. All I have to do to witness evil in its highest form is to look out any window—it's *Free*! I don't have to pay $2.95 to know that I'm surrounded by hatred, fear, destruction, and death. And I'll be damned if I'll endure having it thrown in my face by those who clothe their contempt for the rest of us with tragically-cool posing and bubble-gum arrogance.

Well, gang, if you fancy yourselves as terrorists, there are those among us who'll treat you as terrorists.

I felt like my creative soul was crushed as I saw the Twin Towers collapse. At that moment, most people realized the time for equivocation was over. Now, it's a MATTER OF SURVIVAL! Our families, our friends, our lives are at stake and it's time to take action, to take a stand AGAINST evil and all those who ally themselves with it.

A few years ago, I asked Stan Lee about the bleak direction comics had taken. It was easy to see that he wasn't pleased with it, but he said, "It's what the readers want." I don't believe it. I do believe we want well-developed characters, compelling dialogue, interesting plots, and our money's worth of solid entertainment—God forbid, something that suggests an atom of virtuosity or a new age of awareness.

Instead, we are confronted with an avalanche of over-priced booklets in which it's no longer possible to distinguish between the heroes and the villains because of panels choked with numbingly repetitive fangs and claws, blood and gore, fan-boy rage and T&A chaos. Instead of social mythology, the lollipop esthetic has produced a monument of intellectual and moral poverty. It would be laughable if it wasn't so damned pathetic. Am I being too subtle?

I'm alive, but I'm not all right. I'm in the same position as you and all Americans are at the moment. We've let the world around us get out of hand because we've been too complacent, too careless, too politically correct. The everyday tradition of simple civility, gratitude, courtesy, and thoughtfulness has been replaced by scowling indignation, virulent language, towering disrespect, and open hostility. Our nation is being crushed by evil. I don't know what you're doing about it, but I can no longer turn my back on what I call the Kervorkian Age of Comics. I'm ready to fight it using every resource I can muster.

If there's enough of us, we can put the irresponsible bastards out of business and out of our lives with terminal efficiency—and if that doesn't work, I'll personally provide tickets to the caves of the Taliban.

Is there anyone out there who's had it with devil-worshipping heroes who aren't content unless they're picking shrapnel out of their skulls? Stand up now and fight for the kind of ethics, values, and ideals you believe in. If you don't, you deserve everything you get—and it won't be pleasant!

I'd like to know what side YOU're on.

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INTERVIEW WITH

JIM STERANKO

by Keith Giles

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September 11th, 2001 will forever represent a time of sadness in the heart of every American citizen, the memory of airliners full of innocents striking the WTC forever burned into their psyches. Life as we knew it ceased when the twin towers collapsed and the specter of destruction and death became sickeningly real. Where once such images only existed in a world of fantasy, they were now painfully real. The entertainment that previously helped us escape our daily rituals now touched a raw nerve in our souls, suggesting that these images of violence and evil could offer us nothing of what we really needed as a nation: Inspiration, Security, and Hope.

For days after the tragedy, the nation's entertainment mediums fell deathly silent, partly in reverence for the tragedy and partly because no one had the heart to drink from the shallow well that passes for modern diversion.

One of the first voices to speak out from the world of comics was that of Jim Steranko. In the form of a passionate statement, Steranko expressed his deep disappointment the medium he helped to pioneer. Many fans agreed with his call to return to a code of morality and responsibility, others held tightly to their position that freedom of speech should be protected, even in the shadow of the terrorist attack. Still others misunderstood the point that Steranko was really trying to express.

I had the incredibly rare opportunity to interview Mr. Steranko regarding his comments and offered him the platform to express in detail what he feels should be done in the Comic Book Industry in light of recent events.

Keith Giles: How have the events of September 11th changed you as a person?

Jim Steranko: It's too early to know. We're all still shouldering the shock and anger of the attack. But it has awakened me to how complacent the nation has become and to my own responsibility to my family, friends, and everyone who has roots here.

GILES: Can you define that responsibility?

STERANKO: What happened on 9/11 could and should have been prevented by dozens of government agents and airline security people—in addition to the air controller who irresponsibly decided to ignore the hijack button FOR 18 MINUTES(!) and delayed the Air Force from intercepting the terrorists before they hit the Towers. That irresponsible action cost more than 5000 people their lives, billions of dollars of destruction, and thrust a nation into a nightmare that won't end for generations. If there's one thing we *must* learn it's that irresponsibility breeds death, from mothers who are careless with their babies to governments failing to supervise their operations.

GILES: If that's so, what can you do about it?

STERANKO: I believe that whatever I am today is the result of being a survivor, which grew out of a childhood spent on the street. I like to fight, but I've really tried to mitigate that quality as I get older. It's not easy to change because sometimes it means turning my back on actions I believe are unjust, unethical, and often just unpleasant. I rarely see anyone confronting these situations and the people who instigate them. They walk away, signaling the perpetrators to repeat it and maybe even more catastrophically. They often leave me standing there alone to do something about it. Which brings us to 9/11. Sometimes my conscience won't allow me to walk away. I've watched the darkening of America, which ranges from low scores in schools and bad attitudes in the workplace to escalating crime in the streets and towering political corruption, and find that I can no longer ignore the situation. And on 9/11, I *couldn't* walk away. Pay attention: I didn't say that comics are the problem, but they are part of it. Just for the record, comics are my first love—that's the one you *never* forget. I've worked in many mediums—from music to film— but comics is the form with which I'm most closely associated. Am I making myself clear? There's nothing I could have done about the hijackers, but there is something I can do about comics. From that position, I felt it was time to take a stand against the flood of nihilistic, blood-drenched, malicious obscenities that litter comic racks these days. It seems that the people who should be most concerned have walked away—especially the major companies—so I decided to say something about it. Do you want me to apologize for NOT being a turn-the-other-cheek kind of guy?

GILES: Of course not. But, you realize that you'll probably get a lot of opposition from some in the comics com-

munity who would take the position that what you're advocating is the censorship of their creative energy. They would probably argue that they have the right to draw comics that feature casual sex, brutal violence and brains on the wall. That being said, how have these events changed your personal approach to art?

STERANKO: I doubt that it has. I've had a rather tense background, especially my misspent youth, and take a very cautious approach with almost everything I do. Some habits are tough to break. I still try to position myself in public places with my back to the wall or where I can see who enters the place. When I'm driving, I frequently check my rearview mirror and I don't get out of my car until I've taken a look around. Wherever I'm at, I investigate any odd sounds I hear, day or night. I know the word paranoia comes to mind, but I live in the number one crime city in the country, per capita. A week or so ago, *ten people* were shot here in a four-day period. One died that I know about. Three days later, four more were shot. Barred store windows are commonplace. Itinerants with pockets full of food stamps drive Cadillacs. Drugs are sold openly on street corners. Paranoid or not, I carry a piece around the clock and I wouldn't hesitate to use it if I were threatened. Today, city people live deep in the shadow of violence. *Wake up, America!* It's not a state of mind anymore; it's a way of life.

Jim Steranko

GILES: Comics will always feature some form of violence, especially since the classic struggle of Good verses Evil usually involves physical conflict. Are you against violence per se or only the specific issue of violence and evil for the sake of it?

STERANKO: All stories apply the aesthetics of opposition. No argument there. But when evil becomes not only the means, but the end, it may be time to examine motives and policies. I'm not looking for a return to Golden-Age naivete, but to a new age of responsibility in the arts. In my case, honor and dignity were goals that were worked for, often fought for, and too much of today's media product, especially comics, attempt to corrupt and destroy those qualities. While that loss may have been tolerable in a more amenable past, contemporary life is too damned dangerous without *everyone* expending a maximum of courtesy, consideration, and respect. We must ALL bear this responsibility to survive. That's my message, pal.

GILES: What changes would you like to see take place in the industry with regards to violence and the portrayal of evil?

STERANKO: I am not suggesting the cultural totalitarianism of pure and wholesome comics. What a bore that would be!!! I believe in freedom of speech, creative expression, and diversity of material, but now our society has reached critical mass. Under these conditions, discord and rebellion weaken us and weakness is just down the street from oblivion. Perhaps the only way we can survive is to destabilize the forces threatening our existence. We need to get our lives back under control and one way to do that is to provide strong moral and ethical guidelines, to create material that inspires positive and productive attitudes and articulates honesty, tolerance, and courage—the foundation of propriety upon which America's success was built.

GILES: Your comments after the September 11th tragedy were especially critical of a solicitation for an upcoming book (*Pro*) by Garth Ennis. Why did you single out this book when it hasn't even been released yet? Do you take issue with the work of Ennis or is this just one example used to illustrate your point?

STERANKO: My statement has nothing to do with the book! I received an email in which one of the book's collaborators, Jimmy Palmiotti, described it as "evil" and promoted it as his personal celebration of evil. I took Jimmy at his word and that word was EVIL. His word. He pro-

claimed an alliance with evil, loudly and publicly. You know that straw that broke the camel's back? That word was the straw that did it for me. I'd just spent the day watching the Towers collapse several hundred times and learning something about evil I've rarely witnessed. I was unable to work and wrote my statement that day because I felt I could not turn my back *one more time* on a form that I helped shape. I subsequently spoke to Jimmy about it and he said it was all a "goof!" A joke. The book is a one-shot gag. So, who was more irresponsible: Jimmy, for giving the impression that he was embracing evil, or me, for believing what he said? For the record, Jimmy is the *least* evil guy in comics and maybe that's why he thought it would be funny to say those things. But I clearly stated: "If this is a joke, I'm not laughing." My sense of humor was destroyed when the Towers crushed the humanity inside them and I'm sure I wasn't the only one who felt that way. But, if my own mother had said the same thing, I'd turn on her, too. Listen, I'm drawing the line and anybody who doesn't like it can go straight to hell.

GILES: Are there any specific books published today that you feel are an example of the right way to approach violence and/or sex in comics?

STERANKO: The Steranko Seal of Approval? You gotta be kidding! But I will tell you about a few titles I read. David Mack's *Kabuki* series is full of sex and violence, but they never overshadow the themes he explores in an adult and profoundly poetic manner. Mike Mignola is irresistible; he serves up some of the most hysterical violence in *Hellboy*, but he's so masterful in his presentation that one never feels degraded. Pure fun! On the other hand, Azarello's *100 Bullets*, with its evocative art, is never fun. It's slice-of-life based and cast in irony. I think he gets paid by the "muthafucka" and uses rough language as a short cut to characterization. I know he's better than that, but maybe he's shy about letting us in on it. In 1968, I had a conversation with Stan Lee about producing *real* adult comics. To this very day, there are hardly any, although there are many that pretend to be adult. To most creators and readers, adult means maximum gore, encyclopedic obscenity, and mindless T&A-schismatic, testosterone fantasies. What I said to Stan still applies: *adult comics should dramatize adult themes in an adult manner*. Simple! Dave McKean's *Cages* comes to mind. Bryan Talbot's *Heart of Empire*. Dave Sim's *Cerebus*. There are a number of books that take a reasonable, even responsible tact, but not *enough*. It's those which violate the basic boundaries of morality or glorify evil that I'm referring to—and don't engage me in the rhetoric of sociopolitical evaluation and judgment. I won't become involved in sterile debates that make spectacles of irrelevance. I'll make up my own mind about what I believe is exacerbating the corruption of America and target those books for unilateral boycott. Others who feel like I do will follow suit. And I won't play watchdog for the community. The good and bad lists you're looking for must be tallied by a consensus of consumer opinion.

GILES: Your *S.H.I.E.L.D.* work contained many elements of violence. Do you regret any of your previous works? If you could do them over, would you? Did those books glorify violence in your opinion?

STERANKO: Never! From my first panel, I had my own *code of responsibility* because I realized the power inherent in the form. And don't make the mistake of suggesting that violence is synonymous with action. Sure, I did my share of head butting with the Comics Code, but I never violated *my* code, nor has a single person ever come forward to suggest that I did. To the contrary, I've had many readers confess that the books had a positive impact on them, and sometimes even changed their lives. The only thing I'd do differently today is render them much better. Are you trying to embarrass me?

GILES: No, I was just curious if the events of 9/11 caused you to go back and re-think your portrayals of violence. In response to your press release, I read some comments on a message board about it. One poster wrote the following in response to the comments in your press release: "We must learn from violence, violence must be used as a learning tool and not be denied just because it's a terrible thing. It would be irresponsible for us to do it because we would be turning our back from reality." How would you respond to that?

STERANKO: I'd agree. But we must be prepared to define the difference between "learning from violence" and "learning violence." More blood! More fangs! More brains being blasted out of skulls! Comics have become models for cynicism, corruption, and malevolence, and, in some cases, blueprints for crime. Post that on your message board! In an effort to be cool and sell units, creators contrive scenes for sheer shock value. They begin the process by asking themselves how they can out gross last month's slaughterfest and snare a Diamond *Preview* spotlight. They're cultural terrorists whose agenda is to tear down the tenuous virtues upon which the comic chronology was structured. Their cause is obviously not one of socio-political reform, but to sell enough copies to pay their print bills. Pardon me while I spit.

GILES: You did a pretty good job of tearing down some old-fashioned traditions yourself in your *S.H.I.E.L.D.* series.

STERANKO: I admit it! I doubt if there was a more subversive creator in overground comics in fifty years of four-color publishing history. But what I attacked were moldering, brittle, and fatigued anachronisms that should have been hacked away years before I got there. And I didn't excise anything unless I had a positive solution in place. I changed the rules because comics had become apathetic and had the stink of decay on them. Good or bad, I brought a volley of new ideas to the form and those ideas opened the door for others, such as Sienkiewicz and McKean. I guess I could be called an insurrectionist, but never in the name of intemperance for the love of destruction.

GILES: Other than toning down violence and sexual content, are there any specific things that you feel comic-book creators need to focus on for the future? What positive things can be done to improve the current situation

STERANKO: Generate content that defines the triumph of the spirit, rather than the degradation of the soul. Comics, popular fiction, TV, digital games, and film are going through a period of rampant imitation, of recycled plots and copycat characters. I'm not sure what we can do about the rest, but I do know that major comics publishers, editors, and creators can clean up their acts and deliver material forged with intelligence and integrity—and set a *new standard* for readers, as well as an example for the independents. Adrenaline junkies believe that the more blood and death a book has the better it is. From my viewpoint, quality writing, superb art, and well-developed characterizations with ingenious plots are the criteria upon which a book is judged. Maybe it's been so long since readers have seen anything like that, they've forgotten what it looks like. Of course, it's much more difficult to generate authentic quality than cliché-ridden quantity. That would separate the men from the boys—to use a PI cliché.

GILES: Obviously, the reason why there is such a proliferation of sex and violence in comics is that books with blood, gore and gratuitous butt-shots generally sell better. Do you believe the events of September 11th will change what the public wants to see from comics? Or will things stay the same since there is money to be made off this sort of violence?

STERANKO: That's the heart of the matter, isn't it? Bottom-line mentality. Comics were created as a commodity and have rarely been anything more aesthetic than a medium of exchange. But they could be much more. That responsibility belongs exclusively to their creators.

GILES: Do you have any opinions about violent, yet critically acclaimed, books like *The Authority*, *The Punisher*, *Violent Messiahs* or any others?

STERANKO: There should be a place for everything, but, just as late-night TV jokes about hijackings are off limits, the comics machine needs to adjust its sensibilities to accommodate the times we live in. I see a *direct thread* between the degradation of comics and the disintegration of contemporary morality. I've witnessed postcard communities, where people once left their homes unlocked while they went to the store or slept with screens in the windows without concern for housebreakers, transform into graffiti-covered slums with trash-littered sidewalks. The words to pop-rock songs encourage teen listeners to perform sacrificial slaughters. Drivers are killed over parking spaces and road rage has turned the streets into war zones. Computer hackers create corporate havoc for the hell of it and social misfits infest the digital world with devastating viruses. Kids who begin by torturing animals graduate to sadistic serial killings. Drive-by shootings are daily occurrences and schoolboys have become mass murderers in their classrooms. And comics, once a four-color forum for an army of ideological icons, are now populated by super-powered psychopaths and pseudo-heroic hate-mongers crammed into incoherent narratives that trivialize humanity and promote anti-social aggression. Perhaps at one time, they were on parallel courses, but now those courses have intersected and merged. I wonder if they feed off each other in a kind of incestuous devil-worshipping frenzy, because it's impossible to tell the difference between splash pages and the six o'clock news. It's no secret that comics are powerful teaching tools. What have they been teaching lately?

GILES: What will you be doing, as an artist and comic professional, to help change and/or guide the industry? Will we see more work from you in the near future with an emphasis on a different type of story or storytelling?

STERANKO: I've already opened this debate, which I hope will galvanize passive participants to take positive action on whatever levels they can influence—from what is published to what is purchased. I won't cloud the issue with my personal projects, except to say that, after years of development and experimentation, I'll soon introduce my version of electronic comics, using technology that seems to have the qualifications for defining a new medium. More importantly, I've asked a host of top talents to found a movement relating to the state of comics and their influence in society: Ethical Creators and Consumers for enhancing the awareness of individual responsibility in the arts. Everyone interested in reading their views should visit **eccoforum.com** and respond accordingly. Can anyone with a real concern regarding comics and their impact on our lives afford not to?

Inspiration Central

Subject: TOM DeFALCO

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants; Tom DeFalco on his influences

by Bill Baker

Editor's note: He's run one of the most popular and powerful publishing companies in the business. He's also written the monthly adventures of almost every one of that same publishing house's major characters, often for extended periods. Or, to put it another way, former Marvel Editor-in-Chief Tom DeFalco has done just about everything you can as a writer and editor of comics.

But if you think that working at Marvel Comics for nearly two decades might give DeFalco reason to slow down, or even put aside his love affair with the four-color world of comics, you'd be greatly mistaken. He still writes the monthly adventures of Spider-Girl, a book that has proven to be so popular among its fans that even a cancellation notice couldn't stop it. Now he's joined the ranks of writers and artists who publish their own books under the Image aegis with the release of two titles, Randy O'Donnell is the M@N *and* Mr. Right. *To hear the note of unrestrained excitement in his voice when talking about these new projects, you'd think this was his very first published work. In fact, that very same tremor of excitement is readily apparent when this veteran speaks about comics in general, but particularly so when discussing the creators who inspired him.*

CBM: Are there any particular writers, or other creators, who have had a great deal of influence upon you and your work?

DeFalco: I can think of two inspirations off the top of my head.

The first person who really inspired me to be a writer is probably Edgar Rice Burroughs. I discovered the Tarzan books when I was a young kid, and they transported me to another universe, and I never came back. I still haven't! [General laughter]

Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote those books, which still get to me, on so many emotional levels. This guy was a natural storyteller who could weave a yarn, and tell a story, like no one else in the universe, as far as I'm concerned. In many regards, I think my style of plotting—where I stick with one character, and then cut to another, and then cut to another, and then cut to another, and then go back to the first—I basically get this [technique] off of him.

CBM: Is there any other aspect of his work that you picked up on, and have incorporated into your own efforts?

DeFalco: His work was all about people. It was all about the characters.

A series like the *Mars* series—which had plenty of action, plenty of fight scenes, all sorts of threats—was really about one man's love for his girlfriend, eventually his wife. The first three novels are all about this man trying to get to the girl he loves. It was something [I understood]; even when I was eight years old, I could identify with that problem. Strugglin' through all sorts of problems, just cause I wanted to be with the one I wanted to be with.

CBM: That's a very good point because, with all of the adventures and perils surrounding the hero, it's so easy to forget that there is a real, basic and human reason for all of those adventures. And that does give it a richer feel and resonance, doesn't it?

DeFalco: Ya know, I believe that the purpose of fiction is to make sense of reality.

As a general rule, when people stand around and talk, conversations are random, and they very rarely have a whole point. They meander here, they meander there, and then they eventually die out.

In fiction, every conversation has a point. In reality, random events happen. And, at the end of the day, sometimes we're looking to find meaning in our day. But the truth is, that particular day had no meaning! [General laughter] In fiction, every day has a special meaning. A story is sup-

posed to have a point. So, in many regards, fiction makes sense out of reality.

CBM: You mentioned that you had two inspirations who immediately popped to mind; who was the second?

DeFalco: The second one has to be Stan Lee. 'Cause Stan in so many ways revolutionized the way we look at comic book characters. Under Stan, comic book characters became real people.

My first two Marvels were *Fantastic Four* #3 and #4, and this was a family that squabbled. And I came from a family that squabbled, and I looked at the different personalities there, and they were all in my family. We would all squabble among each other, fight among ourselves. But if somebody outside the family threatened anybody, we were all there, together as a unit.

Like I say, Stan made comic book characters real people. Peter Parker is a real person to me. I know Pete. I know Pete closely, I know what he's going through. In many regards I lived a life similar to Pete. Not quite the same as Pete, [but] so much of what Pete did helped me in so many regards. Every time I face what I believe is an insurmountable problem, I remember Pete Parker buried under a ton of debris at the Master Planner's headquarters, as the water's rising up, and [remind myself that] he somehow found the strength to keep on goin'. And I look back on those things, and I think of Stan as a genius.

I'm obviously givin' all the credit to Stan, and I do not in any way, shape or form mean to dismiss or denigrate the contributions of Jack Kirby or Steve Ditko, because they were a great part of that stuff. When I think of The Fantastic Four, I still think of Jack Kirby's Fantastic Four. And when I think of Spider-Man, I always think of Ditko's Spider-Man.

But Stan was the voice behind that, and in many ways, a personality behind it. And, having met Stan and dealt with him, I can see Aunt May inside Stan, because a lot of those speeches that Aunt May gave to Peter Parker, Stan gave to me over the years. [General laughter] I can see J. Jonah Jameson in Stan, because a lot of those speeches J. Jonah Jameson gave to Peter Parker, Stan has given to me over the years. [Even more laughter] And I can see Peter Parker in Stan, because Peter Parker, in so many ways, is Stan Lee. And so many of the other characters....

I didn't mean to insult Stan by saying he's like those characters, but he is!

CBM: Well, would it be safe to say that you might have taken a cue from Stan and invested a lot of yourself into your work, your characters?

DeFalco: I would say yes. I've probably taken from Stan the idea that you've really got to invest yourself into the characters, and I've probably taken from Edgar Rice Burroughs the style of plotting, and the fact that it should be all about [the] characters.

CBM: Is there anyone else who you might want to add to that short list?

DeFalco: There's one other guy who fits into that: Walt Kelly. Walt Kelly, and Pogo Possum.

I don't know when I noticed *Pogo*. Maybe I was eight years old, maybe I was nine years old. At first I had trouble puzzling it out, and then I realized I was just hooked on that comic strip. I was an avid reader of *Pogo* before I ever discovered comic books. I read *Li'l Abner*, and *Dick Tracy* and all the other adventure strips. My favorite adventure strip was *The Phantom*. But, man, I was hooked on *Pogo*.

CBM: Was it mainly the sense of humor that appealed to you, or was there more to it than that?

DeFalco: It was the characterization. It was the artwork. It was the sense of humor. It was the style of dialogue. There were so many different styles of dialogue. These days I look back at that, and I'm amazed that all that could have come out of one person. And the levels of craft are just incredible, I just don't know how he could have done what he did, Walt Kelly.

I look at all those things that Stan wrote, [and] I don't know how he could have done it! I look at what Edgar Rice Burroughs [did, and] if somebody had previously wrote all those novels, and all I had to do was type 'em, I don't know if I could get halfway through them! [Loud general laughter]

These men, they are all giants. And they give bums like me goals to reach for.

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ODDBALL COMICS

An Introduction to the Wacky, Bizarre and Esoteric!

by Scott Shaw!

I've been fascinated by comic books and cartooning nearly all of my life. I taught myself how to read with "funnybooks" (as they were referred to back in the Lower Devonian Age, otherwise known as the 1950s). I soon became an avid reader and collector of these four-color pamphlets. I already had developed discerning taste; anything with Superman, a gorilla or a dinosaur on the cover was a must-have item! (And in those days, it was not uncommon for a comic's cover to feature all three.) I even charged for the crude drawings I'd scrawl on the book covers of my classmates—three cents for a werewolf's head, five cents for a whole surfer, etc.—in order to supplement my allowance, allotted to the purchase of even MORE comic books! (Sometimes it seems like I'm still working on that basis.) Eventually, I illustrated ads for comic book shops in exchange for my weekly fix of funnybooks, then I graduated to "the hard stuff," managing a comic book store (with my artists' studio in the back room!). By the time I could finally support myself by drawing cartoons professionally (for comic books and animation), I'd already logged about 23 years of reading and collecting comics!

Over the years, my comic collection had grown steadily, and as it became necessary to organize and "groom" the monstrous mound of four-color pulp, I began to notice that I always wound up with a pile of funnybooks that defied categorization. These featured odd genres often from small publishers; many of them weren't even "regular" comics books, but were, instead, promotional "giveaways" printed as premium prizes or advertising gimmicks. Other than the work of those cartoonists (Jack Kirby, Carl Barks, Gilbert Shelton, Sam Glanzman, Orlando Busino, Harvey Eisenberg and others) whose work impressed me to the extent that their unique talents would eventually influence my own drawing style, it were these comics that somehow fascinated me the most. Before long, I found myself inquiring at comic book shops and conventions "Can you show me the box of comics you can't sell?" Nowadays, that would mean I'd probably wind up with a carton of Valiant's *Turok* #1, but back then that turned out to be the best way to augment what was to become the core of my Oddball Comics collection. Cheap, too!

By the mid-70s (while I was working for the American Comic Book Company, a comics shop and mail order service, run by David T. Alexander and Terry Stroud, specializing in the obscure) I'd assembled a carousel's worth of slide-photographs of the covers of what the ABC's Carl Macek and I then called "esoteric comics" and performed my first late-night slide show at the con. The assembled audience couldn't believe what they were seeing: blown up to wall-size, the bizarre images of various funnybook covers both familiar and obscure were riveting and hilarious. And the response to my improvised observations was, to say the least, gratifying. Well, another twenty-five years (or so) have passed since then, and my "Oddball Comics" slide show has become something of a tradition at the convention, playing to standing-room-only crowds. (Strangely enough, every time the show is performed, even I notice some odd detail that I'd never noticed before!)

Some people collect comic books according to publisher. Others collect comics based on specific characters, time periods or creative personnel. But since I've started doing my Oddball Comics slide show for the entertainment of fandom in general, I've encountered numerous collectors and funnybook aficionados who only seek comic books cover-featuring such Oddball (to my thinking, at least) themes as redheaded people, cameras and fish! For that matter, I still flip over practically any comic featuring a dinosaur or a gorilla on its cover! Why do so many fans and collectors harbor such arguably eccentric boundaries to their tastes? Who knows? In a time where diversity of material seems to be a non-issue in the besieged world of comics publishing, I just dig the notion of such individuality!

Also, you have to understand that I have an odd advantage when it comes to assessing comic book art, Oddball or otherwise. Having entered the industry (through underground "comix") in the late 1960s, I've written and/or drawn hundreds of comic book stories. When you've produced as much comics-related work as I have, you quickly learn that NOTHING is written and drawn purely by accident (except possibly in the cases of certain spectacularly inept comics creators, and they usually don't last too long!) Creating is a conscious effort, and with rare exception, comic books have always been a "work-for-hire situation" environment. Combine these factors, and you'll start to understand why various aspects of composition, design and posing attract my cartoonist's eye with unique, surprising and often sidesplitting results! Just consider me to be your personal sherpa into the often-ridiculous realm of Oddball Comics, folks.

Before long, Robert Overstreet asked Carl Macek and I to co-author an article on "esoteric comics" for the 1977 edition of his annual collector's bible, the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. The resulting article, "Esoteric Comics, The Ultimate Collectable" was somewhat odd itself (Carl favored an academic, rather intellectualized approach to the material, while, seeing things through a cartoonist's eyes, my observations were much more directed to the bizarrely goofy aspects of these four-color anomalies). In the article labeled "Presented By The American Comic Book Company," I attempted to quantify "esoteric comics" into a number of categories:

POLITICAL COMICS—These fall into two types: those purporting to be based on established facts (lives of great political figures, i.e., John F. Kennedy, Adlai Stevenson), and those designed to present a particular political doctrine (*Is This Tomorrow*, *How Stalin Hopes He Will Destroy America*.)

Oddball Comics © 2001 by Scott Shaw!

PROMOTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL GIVEAWAYS—Some of the most esoteric examples are The Story of Water Supply (supposedly narrated by an animated droplet—"Willing Water"), *Powermowerman* (illustrated by Vaughan Bode) and *Ricky and Debbie in Sardineland*.

SENSATIONAL DRUG COMICS.

GORILLA AND MONKEY COMICS—One classic example is *He-Man* No. 5 which displays a lone massive gorilla pounding his chest on the cover, apparently the perfect he-man. There was also a glut of "good gorilla" art in comics like *Fantastic Adventures*, *Mark Trail* and even *Tomahawk* (No. 86 "The Rangers vs. King Kolosso").

ALIEN COMICS—Aliens were used to an especially bizarre effect in such DC titles as *Big Town*, *Mr. District Attorney* and *Rex the Wonder Dog*.

MERCHANDISING CHARACTER COMICS—By far the best known of these is *The Adventures of the Big Boy*, distributed by a nationwide chain of "Family Restaurants." Other interesting examples include *Reddy Kilowatt*, the electrical mascot recently replaced by "Energy Ant," *Ronald McDonald* and *Scotty McTape*.

BIZARRE FUNNY ANIMAL COMICS—*Zoot* No. 2 with a bondage funny animal cover is a real esoteric gem. Even Kirby is represented here by "Lockjaw the Alligator" and "Earl The Rich Rabbit" in *Punch and Judy Comics*.

DINOSAUR COMICS—the most outrageous dinosaur series was DC's "The War That Time Forgot" in *Star-Spangled War Stories*. It was here that G.I.s were pitted against dinosaurs during the Second World War. The big lizards were usually drawn with great style by Joe Kubert and Ross Andru.

ATOMIC PARANOIA COMICS—Along with the more obvious *Atom-Age Combat*, *Atomic Attack* and *Atomic Spy Cases* were two outstanding atomic paranoia giveaways—*Picture Parade* No.1 ("Andy's Atomic Adventures") and *Dagwood Splits the Atom*. These last two comics vainly attempt to convince the public that "the atom is your buddy."

ODD-BALL TITLE COMICS—A self-explanatory grouping, with such gems as *Eh!*, *Dick Quick—Ace Reporter*, *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*, *Kokey Koala*, *Little Aspirin* and *Poppo of the Popcorn Theatre*.

THE WEIRD WORLD OF SUPERMAN—The most characteristic is "Tales of the Bizarro World" and those notorious "Imaginary Stories."

HYBRID ESOTERIC COMICS—Crossover titles which combine series or genres. The most characteristic is *Space Western*, and the unusual *Todd Holton—Super Green Beret*.

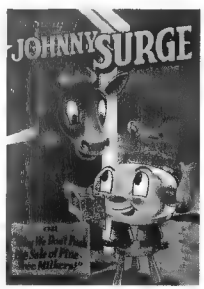
Whew! Even though I wrote that list over 23 years ago (Holy Moly!), it still sums up much of the appeal of Oddball Comics. Ultimately, though, the article mainly served to increase the interest in so-called esoteric comics," and the prices of these previously-obscure books rose accordingly (not to mention alarmingly!). In fact, I began to detect a disturbing trend: whenever I'd perform my late-night slide show at a comic convention, the next day I'd notice that the dealers would have salvaged out copies of many of the books in my show, to display them with healthily marked-up price tags! Although I was starting to realize it (especially after a fanzine article criticizing the promotion of esoteric comics by my friend and fellow cartoonist Don Rosa), I'd become an unwitting shill for the back-issue dealers!

In order to distance myself from this phenomenon, I decided to change my nomenclature for the subject of my slide show presentations: "Oddball Comics." I wanted to promote these comics for their entertainment and historical interest, not to help set artificially-manipulated collector's prices, and I felt this new moniker would make my cheerfully lowbrow approach to the material even more obvious than ever.

Eventually, I made a deal with Denis Kitchen's late, lamented Kitchen Sink Press to produce a set of 36 *Oddball Comics Trading Cards* in 1994. The following year, Denis masterminded an arrangement with Avalanche Press to produce an *Oddball Comics Calendar*. But as cool as these incarnations were, I still longed for the perfect format for spreading my Oddball's creed.

Since then, I've had a number of inquiries about further Oddball Comics projects, but frankly, I just didn't have the time or resources to initiate them. But after finally connecting to the Internet last year, the possibilities of an on-line Oddball Comics feature has intrigued me. After discovering *Comic Book Resources* (and collaborating with Gail, the brilliantly funny creator of *CBR*'S weekly humor column "You'll All Be Sorry!") I soon became acquainted with *CBR*'s Grand Pooh-Bah and all-around good-guy cyber-boss, Jonah Weiland. Jonah immediately saw the possibilities inherent in the material, and suggested doing a daily "Oddball Comics" feature. Check it out at:

www.comicbookresources.com.



As time goes on, in addition to sharing the cover images of "the craziest comic books ever published," I will be adding lots of fun bells and whistles (hey, it's better than the usual smoke and mirrors) to "Oddball Comics."

With the latest and greatest edition of *CBM* now on the stands, life-long pal Michael Naiman suggested that I utilize the Upper Devonian technology of ink and paper to also spread the Oddball gospel to those of you who still enjoy reading.

But so much for hype. "Oddball Comics" is finally here in what promises to be the ideal format, with a new Oddball Comic every month…and we're not running out of material any time soon! Have fun and remember that every comic book is a potential Oddball Comic…it all depends on how you look at it!

ODDBALL COMICS

"The Old Man of Metropolis" is the type of story that perfectly epitomizes DC editor Mort Weisinger's approach to the Superman family and mythos. Here's the story in a nutshell: Clark Kent takes the Daily Planet's "Flying Newsroom" helicopter to visit Midvale Orphanage on an assignment from his editor Perry White to "write up the talents of gifted children! The publicity will help them to become adopted!" There, he meets up with his cousin Kara, (AKA Supergirl) who is disguised as her civilian identity of Linda Lee. She covertly slips him a manuscript of a sample of her writing, entitled "My Career As Superwoman." Clark peruses it back at his apartment, then decides to take a short nap, still weakened by a close call with a huge kryptonite meteor earlier in the day. Suddenly, he's awakened by the roar of a runaway rocket, which he uses "his most blazing superspeed" to smash. Out of control, Superman crosses the time-barrier into the Metropolis of the future! He's further astounded to see a reflection of his face, which shows that he's somehow become transformed into an old man! No one recognizes him, except his cousin Kara, who by now is Superwoman! And when Superman visits the Daily Planet (they still have newspapers in this 1960-version of the future!), he discovers that Perry White is dead, "James" Olsen is now the Planet's editor and that Linda (Superwoman) Lee has taken over his role as the Planet's top reporter! He also learns that Lex Luthor has reformed, been pardoned, and after discovering a cure for cancer, has become the mayor of Metropolis! Lana Lang has married a millionaire, Krypto has been hauled off to the Dog Pound, his Fortress of Solitude has been taken over by Superwoman, and the bottle city of Kandor has been enlarged and relocated to another planet! When Superman finds that he's no longer vulnerable to kryptonite, he's arrested (for possession of green K, no less!) and jailed, it turns out that his cellmate is a geriatric version of Bizarro! When he receives a visit from elderly Lois Lane, an "old maid" who's wasted her life "waiting" for the Man of Steel, he starts to propose marriage, only to...wake up! Yes, it's all been a dream! (An incredibly depressing dream, if you ask me!)

10¢
NOV. NO. 270
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ACTION COMICS
THE AMAZING STORY OF... "SUPERMAN'S OLD AGE!"
LOOK, LOIS! IT'S SUPERGIRL GROWN UP INTO A SUPERWOMAN! SHE'S FORGOTTEN ME, TOO--LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE. I'M A HAS-BEEN!
SIGH! DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU THINK OF THE OLD DAYS, SUPERMAN, WHEN YOU HAD ALL YOUR SUPER-POWERS? AND AREN'T YOU SORRY I'VE BECOME AN OLD MAID!

ACTION COMICS # 270 (Nov 1960)

Cover pencils: Curt Swan Inks: Stan Kaye

The Old Man of Metropolis

Script: Otto Binder Pencils: Curt Swan Inks: John Forte

Supergirl's Busiest Day

Script: Jerry Siegel Pencils and Inks: Jim Mooney

This issue of Action Comics also features a "Supergirl" story entitled "Supergirl's Busiest Day!" Drawn by Jim Mooney, it guest-stars Batman, Robin, Krypto the superdog and even Superman's mermaid-sweetheart, Lori Lemaris! Supergirl's "busiest day" also turns out to be her 16th birthday, so dig the little gift that her cousin Superman gives her:

Here's a little GIFT, Linda! A make-up kit! You're old enough to use make-up now! This fine lipstick case may be very helpful to you! Watch. See, you can super-compress your costume and boots, then hide them INSIDE the lipstick case! If you ever have to conceal your costume quickly, or remove it to go swimming, this handy device will be helpful!"

ODDBALL Factoid? Although this specific cover scene doesn't actually appear in "Superman's Old Age!," it's a real testament to the prodigious talent of cover-penciller Curt Swan, (who also drew the interior story it illustrates!). Just take a closer look at the way Krypto's drawn here—that's exactly how a poor old dog looks at its master! Brilliant stuff indeed!

SCOTT SHAW! has been writing and drawing comic book stories since the late 1960s, entering the field with stories for underground comix. He wrote and drew many stories for Marvel's line of Hanna-Barbera comics in the 1970s, and in the early 1980s he co-created DC's Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew! Since then, he has written, pencilled and/or inked many other kid-friendly funnybooks, including Eisner Award-winning work on Bongo's Simpson's Comics *and* Bart Simpson's Treehouse of Horror. *Some of Scott's other recent comic book work includes contributions to* Streetwise *(TwoMorrows),* World's Funniest *(DC) and the upcoming* Spark Generators *(Slave Labor). Scott has also worked extensively in animation as a producer/director/designer/ writer/story director and is currently a Senior Art Director for Ogilvy & Mather, an advertising agency, writing, designing, storyboarding and art directing all animated TV commercials and print ads for Post Pebbles (starring the Flintstones) and Alpha-Bits cereals. Additionally, he feverishly produces a week-daily on-line feature, Oddball Comics, spotlighting "the craziest comic books ever published!" (www.comicbookresources.com/columns/oddball/) Scott lives in Sherman Oaks, California with his wife, son and three cats.*

Oddball Comics © 2001 by Scott Shaw! CBM87-1

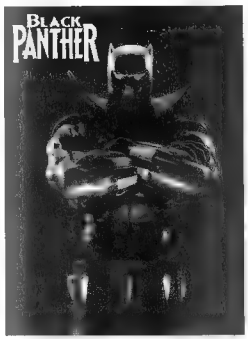
cover ©2001 DC Comics

COLLECTABLE CHARACTER STATUES

by Mike Wilbur

BOWEN DESIGNS GET BUSTED

Like many collectors, I initially let **Bowen Designs'** series of Marvel Comics characters mini-busts pass below my radar screen. The reasons vary from collector to collector; for me, it was a personal dislike for "incomplete" statues. I could sort-of accept a figure depicted from the beltline up. Maybe he's just submerged waist-deep in water, or concrete, or something.



What I *really* hated was the lack of arms. It really bugged me. It made the characters look like the unfortunate victims of a bad quinjet crash or something. Just those ragged-sculpted shoulder stumps where the arms were supposed to be.

What turned me around was the **Black Panther**, Bowen's 12th bust in the series—and the first to have arms. I bought it, and it was awesome (as is all of Randy's work). With his head held high and his arms crossed defiantly across his chest, the Black Panther bust had a regal bearing befitting a king.

But then, I started thinking. What do I do now? It's a really good piece of Bowen workmanship, but it's a *bust*! I hate busts! But, it's got *arms*! But it's a *bust*! And to make matters worse, it was just *one* in a whole *series* of busts! What's a compulsive completist to do?

A second one, X-Men villain **Magneto**, 14th in the series, sort of fell into my lap. It was returned by someone who decided he didn't like it. He sat there on the counter looking at me magnetically for a few days before I relented. True, he didn't have arms, but he *did* have a long cape that dropped off his shoulders and hid those tell-tale stumps. Maybe he did have arms; they were just hidden under his cape.

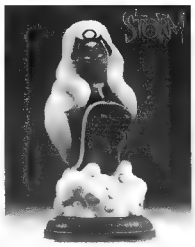
But that did it. I was hooked. Since then, I've just routinely ordered myself one of each in the series as they're solicited. And, between San Diego and Chicago cons in summer 2000, I managed to pick up five of the first 11 that I was missing, at somewhat reasonable prices. Unfortunately, shortly after I made my acquisitions, the market exploded. Recent selling prices on **eBay** have crushed my hopes for acquiring the remaining six pieces I need without having to rob an armored car or a bank.

Secondary market value for anything with Bowen's name on it is insane. However, there is a wide gulf in demand and pricing between the pieces Randy sculpts personally, and the ones he subcontracts to other sculptors and releases under the Bowen Designs imprint.

You really can't beat the Bowen mini-busts for entry-level value. They are sculpted in **1:8** scale, the same as Bowen's full-size/full-figure statues, with original retail prices ranging from **$35 to $55**. By comparison, the full-figure statues usually have an original retail in the **$140 to $175** range. Price varies with the size and intricacy of the individual piece. Of course, secondary market value shoots through the roof as soon as a particular piece is announced as "sold out," with many items commanding sums many multiples of their issue price within months of release.

Due to low production numbers, **early releases** routinely sell for prices in excess of **$100**, with the first five bringing upwards of **$300** each. The fourth release in the series, **Ant-Man**, with the series' lowest production run of only **2000 units**, was selling briskly at the 2001 WizardWorld con in Chicago

for **$325** to **$375**. At the same show, the fifth-released **Cyclops**, with a **run of 3000**, was selling easily at **$350**.



Edition size usually averages 4000 to 5000, although five of the first 30 releases exceeded 5000. And growing popularity of the line resulted in the low-end of edition sizes being raised to 6000 units beginning with #32.

As of November 2001, 46 Marvel character mini-busts have been released or advance-solicited, including three retailer-specific exclusives. And that's okay with me, because some of them even have arms!

Bowen's Marvel Mini-Bust Release Order

At right is the official release sequence of Bowen Designs' series of Marvel Mini-Busts. Included are the edition size, and the original retail price.

Note that #6 was skipped in the original release sequence and later assigned to Iron Man II (which was actually released between #14 and #15), and #8 was accidentally assigned twice. Eventually, future problems were eliminated when Bowen ceased printing the sequence number on the packaging.

1	Hulk	3000	$42.00
2	Thor	3000	$50.00
3	Man-Thing	2000	$30.00
4	Ant-Man	2000	$25.00
5	Cyclops	3000	$30.00
6	Iron Man II	4000	$30.00
7	Storm	3000	$35.00
8	Deadpool	2500	$35.00
8 (9)	Iron Man	2000	$30.00
10	Moleman	N/A	$30.00
11	Red Skull	3000	$35.00
12	Black Panther	4000	$30.00
13	Black Bolt	3000	$35.00
14	Magneto	4000	$30.00
15	Iron Fist	4000	$35.00
16	Scarlet Witch	5000	$35.00
17	Wolverine	7000	$35.00
18	Deadpool Unmasked	5000	$35.00
19	Wolverine –Gold Edition (Fandom.com Exclusive)	2000	
20	Vision	5000	$35.00
21	Nightcrawler	5000	$35.00
22	Colossus	5000	$45.00
23	Apocalypse	5000	$45.00
24	Thanos	5000	$45.00
25	Sabertooth	7000	$40.00
26	Wolverine Brown	9000	$35.00
27	Hawkeye	5000	$40.00
28	Spider-Man	12000	$40.00
29	Green Goblin	10000	$40.00
30	Mr. Fixit (Best Comics Exclusive)	2500	$44.95
31	Giant-Man and Wasp	6500	$55.00
32	Angel	6000	$40.00
33	Doctor Octopus	6000	$45.00
34	Rhino	6000	$40.00
35	Spider-Man "Alter-Ego" (WizardWorld Exclusive)	6000	$47.99
36	Weapon X	9000	$40.00
37	Ghost Rider	5000	$40.00
38	Captain America	TBD	$45.00
39	Juggernaut	TBD	$50.00
40	Black Widow	TBD	$40.00
41	Daredevil Red	TBD	$40.00
42	US Agent	TBD	$45.00
43	Luke Cage, Powerman	TBD	$40.00
44	The Thing	TBD	$40.00
45	Galactus	TBD	$60.00
46	Doctor Strange	TBD	$40.00

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

by J.C. Vaughn, Executive Editor

FOOT SOLDIERS: ALIVE AND KICKING

Jim Krueger, who with Alex Ross has spent the last few years creating *Earth X*, *Universe X*, and now *Paradise X* for Marvel Comics, has just released the second volume of his creator-owned series, *The Foot Soldiers*, through AIT/PlanetLar (publishers of *Astronauts in Trouble*). Originally published by Dark Horse and then Image in single-issue format, Foot Soldiers is a refreshingly noble experiment. Krueger does not ignore the darker trends in comics and general entertainment, he takes them to their logical, dystopic conclusions. In that end-of-the-line darker world, he and his characters plant the seeds of hope and more or less rebels against being darker and grittier simply for the sake of being darker and grittier. *CBM* tossed three questions Krueger's way, and here's what he had to say:

CBM: For a relatively small, creator-owned title, *Foot Soldiers* has a die-hard following among its fans and other creators. Why is that?

Jim Krueger: I think it's because *Foot Soldiers*, and I'm speaking of the characters and heroes within, speak to something deeper than the need to be entertained. It challenges the modes of courage and cowardice. It defines heroism as much as it deconstructs it. Unlike, say *Earth X* or *Universe X* in which the heroes are part of a larger story and universal revelation, this is just about three kids who went to the graveyard of super-heroes and robbed the graves, attempting to fill the shoes of legend. It treats the current super-hero continuity as a legend that's been passed down and mostly lost. And it tries to resurrect the best of what super-hero comics are all about. Oh, and it's got kids stomping things with big boots.

CBM: Although the world they live in is very bleak, the characters themselves are not, and neither are their stories. Is this a reaction of sorts on your part to contemporary entertainment, a longing for simpler times or something else?

KRUEGER: Things have to be dark for hope to have any impact at all. But that's also a very key idea. When things are hopeless, even the smallest victory is a great one. And *Foot Soldiers* is a chance for me to write small stories.

CBM: Your first story arc was illustrated by Mike Oeming, who has gone on to fame as co-creator of *Powers* with Brian Michael Bendis. Your second story arc featured the work of Phil Hester, who has gone on to work with Kevin Smith on *Green Arrow*. Who is doing the third story arc? When will it appear? And can that artist expect sudden notoriety as well?

KRUEGER: Steve Yeowell is drawing the third volume. He's drawn *Starman*, *Invisibles* and one of the most influential comics of my career—*Zenith*, which was written by Grant Morrison. The next volume will explain how this terrible Charles Dickens-esque world of the future came to be—and it will introduce the newest member of the team—the Spokesman. As far as notoriety goes, Steve sure deserves it.

The first trade paperback features an **Alex Ross** cover. The second sports a **Bill Sienkiewicz** cover (and includes a couple chapters inked by Sienkiewicz, too). Both are now available at your local retailer (and are available to them through Diamond's STAR System).

UPCOMING FROM DARK HORSE COMICS

In comics and other comic character collectibles, Dark Horse has been putting out some pretty interesting items. The coming months seem to be no exception.

First, they're adding Christmas-themed releases of both *The Simpsons* and *Futurama* to their **Pop-Out People** line. These are the fifth sets in each series of pop-out characters. Each set comes with eight stand-up characters and a two-sided diorama background for display. They retail for $2.99 and should be available in November.

Another *Futurama* item from Dark Horse is their new **Horrible Gelatinous Blob** squishy toy. You'll find one of the familiar *Futurama* characters trapped inside the HG Blob. Not announced previously, it will be released in case lots that include four different versions, each one containing a different character: Fry, Leela, Bender and Professor Farnsworth. Each will retail for $9.99.

In addition to the Pop-Out People, the lunch boxes, magnet sets, shot glasses and other cool stuff, they've also produced a great line of **Zippo lighters**. Sin City, Bettie Page and Olivia have been among the previous offerings. Now they've teamed up with HBO for a pair of lighters emblazoned with the logo from Tom Hanks' series *Band of Brothers*. The standard edition retails for $39.95, and the special edition, limited to 750, is priced at $100. They're scheduled to be in stores December 12, 2001.

UPCOMING FROM DC COMICS

Fans and new comics retailers alike are wondering how folks will react to *Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again*, **Frank Miller**'s sequel to *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. Can Miller knock it out of the park again? It's been 15 years since the original. We'll find out soon enough. The first of the three monthly 80-page issues arrives this December. We'll take a look at the impact of the original—was it really to blame for the dark and gritty comics of the '90s?—in *CBM* #90.

Also on the docket—*at long last*—is the first volume of *Sgt. Rock Archives*. It's not going to arrive until April 2002, but make sure your local retailer is going to order this one for you. It's 240 pages from *G.I. Combat* #28 and *Our Army At War* #81-96 and includes the work of artists Joe Kubert (without whom...), Russ Heath, Mort Drucker, Ross Andru, Jerry Grandinetti, and Mike Esposito. The writing credits belong to Bob Kaninger and Bill Haney. There's a Rock action figure, too.

Other *Archives* in the near future include *World's Finest Archives—Volume 2* (featuring #86-101) and *The Spirit Archives—Volume 6* (reprinting January 3, 1943 to July 27, 1943). They're due in stores December 5 and December 12, respectively. The *Archives* retail for $49.95 each.

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The Michael Naiman Report

M.I.O. (Missing in 'Overstreet')

Accolades are due to the overworked few who have the daunting task of compiling, sorting, analyzing and inputting the data in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Unless you have walked in their shoes, you have no idea the amount of time it takes to organize this feat. I've been there, done that…so I know of what I speak. With that said, one has to understand that because of the avalanche of data (and page limitations) some listings may not make it into the book. Let's look at a couple.

Popular Eerie Publication horror mags that are currently listed include: Horror Tales (1969-1979); Strange Galaxy (1971); Tales from the Tomb (1969-1975); Tales of Voodoo (1968-1974); Terror Tales (1969-1979); Weird (1966-1981); Weird Worlds (1970-71); and Witches Tales (1969-1975).

Here's a couple of unlisted Eerie magazines for you diehard horror fans to sink your teeth into. Ever heard of Weird Vampire Tales or Terrors of Dracula? Published by Modern Day and residing at the same address as those who brought you Eerie Publications. Strange coincidence? Don't think so. These were available only on the newsstand. These 68-page, black and white magazines contain the "typical" excess violence, blood, bondage and severed limbs that one comes to expect in this genre.

For the record, the issues known to exist are: Terrors of Dracula V1 #1 (5/79), no #2 and #3 are known to exist, 4 (8/79), 5 (11/79); V2 #1(2/80), 3 (8/80); V3 #2 (9/81)…does V3 #1 exist? Values in NM condition can range from $25-$40. Weird Vampire Tales V3 #1 (4/79), 2 (7/79), 3 (10/79), 4 (1/80); V4 #2 (4/80), 3 (7/80); V5 #1 (1/81), 2 (8/81), 3 (3/82) (see illustrations).

Thanks to North of the Border Overstreet Advisor Doug Sulipa for the above stated info and copies of the covers.

Whitman reprints have piqued the curiosity of more than a few collectors recently (see Jon McClure's article in CBM issues #85 and #86) so I thought it would be appropriate to throw some more fuel on that fire!

I've beaten the drums rather vigorously over the years touting the hard-to-find issues like the Uncle Scrooge #179 and Donald Duck #222. Now entering the arena of astronomic anomalies is Little Lulu #260. Many Lulu completists have been looking for this issue for eons. The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide lists it for $1.25 in Good, $3.75 in Fine and $10 in NM. Everyone sitting down? A copy in GD/VG condition recently sold for $598. Yes, Five-Hundred-and-Ninety-Eight dollars…US currency! That would be 239X Guide for a Bronze Age book from 1980! And this is a reprint!

A list of DC comics with the Whitman imprint has been collated by Doug Sulipa and a group of curious collectors. Currently the only variants listed in the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide are the Action Comics titles which appear on page 282 of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide #31. Sulipa reports the list is about 95%+ complete! Obviously, NOT all issues of the period exist as "Whitmans." It seems rather random. A survey indicates that there is one Whitman for every 20 to 100 regular editions printed! (An average of 40 regular editions for every one Whitman).

Whitman variants of DCs = 126 issues in 14 titles that are known to exist. About half of these titles have no price on the cover. All issues listed here have no issue numbers on the covers! All issues are clearly marked with the Whitman logo on the cover.

Action #482 (4/78), 485-492, 496, 498, 504, 505, 507, 508 (6/80); All-New Collectors Edition C-56 (Superman vs M. Ali); Batman #306, 307, 312-315, 320, 323, 324, 326 (8/80); Brave and the Bold #145 (11/79), 146, 150-155, 157, 159, 165 (8/80); DC Comics Presents #1 (7-8/78); 2-4, 10-12, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22 (6/80); Flash #268 (12/78), 273-276, 278, 283, 286 (6/80); Green Lantern #117 (6/79), 118, 119, 121 (10/79); Justice League #158 (9/78), 160, 162, 168, 169, 171, 172, 176, 179, 181 (8/80); Legion of Superheroes #261 (3/80), 263, 264, 266 (8/80); New Adventures of Superboy #2 (2/80), 5, 6, 8 (8/80); Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes #244 (10/78), 245-248, 251-257 (11/79); Super Friends #14 (10-11/78), 16, 21-23, 32 (5/80); Superman #321 (3/78), 322, 323, 325, 326, 327, 329-331, 336-338, 340, 341, 343-345, 348, 350 (8/80); Wonder Woman #250 (12/78), 251, 255-262 (12/79). Please contact me with any other issues/titles that you might find.

New to the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide this year is a listing under Flintstones entitled On The Rocks. Published by Dell in September 1961, this originally priced $1 book has a card-

board cover and contains 116 pages printed on high quality paper featuring all new black and white stories. According to experts there are only three known copies in existence...counting this one (see illustration)! Comic Detective Jon McClure (seller) and noted Hanna/Barbera artist/historian Scott Shaw! (buyer) recently concluded a transaction where $300 (cash and art) was paid for a copy in Fine condition. That would be over 10X Guide for this little gem!

From Tom Gordon of Monster Collectibles comes another variant tidbit. In the mid to late 70s, a special full color insert from Mark Jewelers was placed inside both DC and Marvel issues. The ad inserts were printed in color on a thicker stock than standard

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#22 VG+ $492 93%
#65 VG $86 56%
#66 FN $229 Guide
#87 FN $186 90%
#89 VF $340 74%
#90 VF $380 89%
#94 VG $47 38%
#95 VF $275 67%
#97 VF $229 58%
#100 VG $121 48%
#106 FN+ $149 82%
#111 VG $85 70%

Amazing Spider-Man
#3 VG $190 53%
#5 VG $123 47%
#24 VF $150 90%
#129 NM $140 74%

Atom
#2 VF $94 42%
#3 VF $125 87%

Avengers
#2 FN $76 47%
#2 VG $56 52%
#3 VG $48 64%
#4 FN $280 65%
#18 NM $62 62%

Batman
#4 VF $2,925 64%
#21 FN $190 43%
#22 VF $510 55%
#25 VF $610 45%
#31 FN $255 76%
#36 VF $405 59%
#38 VF $405 54%
#41 VF $245 50%
#51 VG+ $104 68%
#53 VG+ $85 56%
#56 FN $178 78%
#60 VG $53 35%
#72 VG+ $77 63%
#79 VG $49 40%
#83 VF $233 66%
#87 FN+ $120 70%

Black Cat Mystery
#42 FN $71 1.11X

Blackhawk
#108 VG+ $45 55%

Brave and Bold
#28 VG $405 57%
#29 VG $227 71%
#35 VF $173 48%
#38 VF $113 80%
#44 VF $123 70%
#51 VF $66 42%
#54 VF $96 50%

Comic Cavalcade
#14 VG $146 81%
#18 VG $108 60%
#23 GD $87 52%

Daredevil
#1 VG $255 83%
#1 FN $305 66%
#1 VG $200 65%
#2 FN $88 70%
#2 VG $51 61%
#3 VG $25 40%
#4 VG+ $40 69%

Detective
#105 VF $305 69%
#111 VG+ $86 61%
#147 FN+ $114 66%
#157 VG $82 71%
#161 VF $206 62%
#177 VF $184 63%
#182 VF $154 52%

Eighty Page Giant
#1 VF $203 63%
#5 VF $72 50%
#10 VF $51 44%
#11 VF $76 65%
#13 VF $76 65%
#14 VF $51 44%

Fantastic Four
#1 GD $610 76%
#5 GD $175 80%
#6 FN $250 65%
#6 VG $124 48%
#7 VG $130 95%
#48 FN $110 49%

Flash
#123 FN $260 87%

Green Lantern
#1 VG $315 74%
#3 FN $92 82%
#5 VF $153 69%
#9 VF $153 96%
#28 VF $71 86%
#76 VF $92 72%

House of Secrets
#92 VF $180 49%

Justice League of America
#2 VG $76 63%
#3 FN $143 92%
#5 VF- $104 47%
#7 VF $124 65%
#8 VF $128 67%
#9 VF $245 82%
#11 VF- $54 40%
#12 VF $90 67%
#14 VF $103 77%
#15 VF $74 55%
#16 VF $84 73%
#17 VF $61 53%
#22 VF $114 60%

Mister Mystery
#7 VG $250 1.07X

New Gods
#1 NM $41 50%

Our Army At War
#6 GD $73 91%
#13 VG $61 80%
#92 VG $43 1.38X
#116 VF $39 58%
#131 VF $35 79%
#151 VG $41 60%
#164 VF $65 82%

Our Fighting Forces
#19 VG $17 55%
#35 VF $43 52%
#50 VG- $25 1.53X
#58 VF $28 55%
#69 VG $19 1.9X

Shock SuspenStories
#8 FN $80 95%

Showcase
#6 VG+ $336 64%
#7 FN $304 75%
#16 VG $72 48%
#19 VG+ $154 74%
#30 VF $314 61%
#31 VF $153 58%

Strange Mysteries
#10 FN $60 85%

Superman
#58 VF $255 65%
#60 FN $155 82%
#67 FN $125 69%
#69 VF $292 77%
#71 VG $83 72%
#76 FN $405 1.2X
#77 FN $140 82%
#80 FN $108 64%
#81 VF $161 47%
#91 VG $36 39%
#96 VG+ $57 71%
#100 VG $203 51%

Tales to Astonish
#37 VG $45 64%

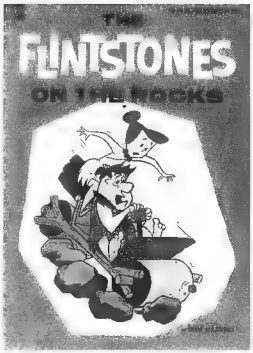
Thrilling Crime Cases
#49 FN $135 1.08X

Trump
#1 FN $40 59%

Unseen
#9 FN $50 57%

World's Finest
#3 FN $560 59%
#8 VF $437 40%
#10 VF $406 41%
#11 FN $234 57%
#14 VF $313 37%
#16 VF $510 60%
#18 FN $227 65%
#23 VG $91 54%
#24 FN $163 64%
#27 VF $291 55%

X-Men
#2 FN $193 45%
#5 FN $113 92%
#13 FN $35 43%
#28 NM $125 69%
#94 FN+ $115 71%
#101 NM $158 1.75X



comic paper. The color insert is 6 1/2" x 10" in size and is four pages total. They were attached at the center of the comic. They can be seen if one looks at the top edge of the comic as you can see a thin blue line between the pages. One can only speculate that these books were either distributed overseas (or near stateside military bases) and were there to lure comic- (and love-) starved servicemen to purchase goodies for their enamorata! Here is a list of books that have been discovered to have these inserts. The highest profile book of those with the insert is Hulk #181. There may be many more out there!

DC: Action Comics #444, 448; Adventure Comics #440; Black Magic #8; Flash #233, 234; Ghosts #33; Kamandi #24; Shadow #12; Superboy #206; Superman #282; Weird Mystery Tales #15; Witching Hour #50, 51, 55; Wonder Woman #215; Young Love #116.

Marvel: Adventure Into Fear #27; Astonishing Tales #28; Avengers #134; Captain America #182, 183; Chamber of Chills #15; Conan #47, 50; DareDevil #113; Fantastic Four #155, 156; Iron Man #68; Marvel's Greatest Comics #56; Marvel Super Heroes #49, 50; Marvel Tales #48, 55; Marvel Team-Up #31; Thor #231, 233, 234; Tomb of Dracula #32; WereWolf By Night #21.

Recent Mark Jeweler Sales: Marvel Team-Up #18 FN for $15 (3.33X Guide); Amazing Adventures #29 VG for $7 (3.68X Guide).

December 18th, 1991 will go down as one of the high-water marks in the history of comic book collecting. Sotheby's introduced the live auction of our favorite four color issues and the call went out to collectors of all types that, "Hey, there's valuable funny books out there!" Quick to jump on the bandwagon were the other national auction houses. The legitimacy of the comic as an investment was to be spread far and wide. It brought in some new collectors and investors and also caused a wave of excitement and euphoric enthusiasm about the marketplace. Prices on high-grade product were escalating on a daily basis.

And today, a scant ten years later—there are no live auctions to be seen! The rise and fall of the live auction venue has fallen upon hard times. The Electronic Auction House provided by the Internet can be held accountable for negatively influencing and affecting the live auction. Any yahoo with no background in the field can easily obtain a slabbed book and throw it up for grabs online. Quick and easy. No comic book expertise needed. No large investment in a catalog. No expensive advertising. No grading knowledge. No hosted previews. No free grub. It's just a product. The prestige associated with live auctions has apparently seen its day. Now all we are left with is the PT Barnum get-rich-quick approach to comic collecting sponsored by the Johnny-come-lately big-money corporations. One publicly held company apparently learned a hard financial lesson about these "investibles" and cancelled its fall auction. In fact, they're out of the comic collectibles market entirely! Buy high and sell low—hope to make it up in volume! When will they learn?

Superman—Yesterday and Today. I gave the WB network's Smallville a first night premiere viewing. Heavy on characterization and nice (but not overdone) special effects…we have another WB "pretty-young-high-schoolers-with-problems" formula series with a touch of the angst of My So Called Life. But, hoping for the best, I watched the whole program. Attention to detail was appreciated. Even though Lana Lang's hair isn't red (I could handle that) her dead parents' names also had the "LL" initials, Pete Ross is an African-American, good touch having Annette O'Toole (Lana in Superman I) as Martha Kent; and Lex Luther 's character looks promising. While no one watching this could possibly think that studly Clark looks like a "geek," I'll watch it again. Maybe Krypto and Superboy's robots will make an appearance!

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Firstly, let me take this opportunity on behalf of everyone on this small island to express our sympathy and condolences for the events of 11th September. We send to our brothers and sisters in the US our very best wishes and also a message of support; be assured that we will stand with you in the difficult times ahead.

That said, on to business, and what a busy month it's been! After the traditional lull of the summer months, Silver Age sales have peaked once again. Without selling a single key book (FF #48 coming closest to this description), we've accounted for over £6,500 (not far off $10,000) of Silver/Bronze Age Sales in the last four weeks. A lot of Spideys amongst the books sold, but thankfully people have at last remembered that there are other titles out there and a number of them aren't bad at all!

On 7th October, we took a couple of tables at the mart held at the Royal National Hotel and did some great business. It's probably a good idea to put our US cousins in the picture as to what constitutes a 'show' here in the UK, just in case any of you decide to make the trip and get excited about attending. You know the way you come over here and see things and comment how small they are, or how quaint? Same applies to shows.

You know all that stuff in sunny San Diego with guest panels and super-hero costumes and artist signings and trading over four days? Well, we'll have none of that nonsense over here, thank you very much! No, what we'll do here is hold a show from noon through to 4 pm on a wet, miserable Sunday afternoon. We'll do it somewhere where the hotel staff treat you like lepers and you have to park four streets away to unload. The signings will be limited to paying for the various bar tabs and the only costumes on view are the glaringly bright red ones the sour-faced lobby receptionist wears. And I'm talking here about the large London shows. You do not want to know what goes on in the provinces!

Still, we wring as much enjoyment and excitement out of the occasion as we can. Most faces both sides of the tables are recognizable and there is a wary camaraderie between dealers. Some great books are to be had and prices are mostly realistic and reasonable. Attendance is around the 500-600 mark for the better London shows (which is probably about the number of dealers at San Diego), but most are long-term, knowledgeable collectors who love to talk books and, thankfully, spend a bit of money. Even given the current uncertainty regarding the global economy, there appears to be no reluctance to lay down the cash for the right book.

Oh, yeah, and if you do ever get over here for a show...the beer in the bar is supposed to be warm!

Amazing Spider-Man #71 VF+ $63, #121 NM $275; Fantastic Four #48 CGC Graded VF+ $950; Nick Fury, Agent Of SHIELD #2 NM- $57; Silver Surfer #1 VF+ $450; Tales Of Suspense #59 GD/VG $56.

Patrick Marchbanks

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Greetings again from South Mississippi. The market is as active as ever. Golden and Silver Age continue to sell well in all grades, and in a surprising turn of events I have noticed an increase in sales of books that have in the past gone basically unnoticed and never sold for even Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide prices. This longing for individuals to add these books to their collections corresponded for the most part with the release of the CGC population report so we now know just what has been graded by CGC, and in turn have a better understanding of how many of certain books are out there. With upcoming auctions and conventions we can only look to the future and see what price record will be broken next.

Online sales have been steady both from website sales and online auction sites. CGC encapsulated books continue to do extraordinarily well online, most likely due to the high comfort level it gives buyers. The idea of knowing that the book you are buying has been accurately graded and has had an accurate restoration check always increases online bids.

Restored books continue to sell for average prices, but I have noticed an increase in the number of restored books being sold. I attribute this almost solely to the astronomical prices being paid for unrestored high-grade books. Some collectors simply must purchase restored copies if they wish to have a particular book in their collection

Recent sales: Batman #5 GD- $450; Detective Comics #14 GD $600; Fantastic Four #3 GD $200; Incredible Hulk #1 GD $700, #2 GD $200, #3 VG $200, #4 GD $150, #5 GD $150, #6 VG $250; Strange Tales #110 CGC VG $250; Superman #4 FA $300; X-Men #2 FN $475.

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This summer we set up at Wizard World and Dragon Con. We had three booths in Chicago, but made the same money as last year. I bought a lot more comics this year than I did last year. This was a great buying show for me. Unfortunately, I need to sell more comics than I'm able to. This show has gotten too expensive for me to set up at. So next year I will be buying comics at the shows instead of setting up and selling.

Dragon Con was a bust. This is the most poorly run show that I've attended in the United States. The people that could find the dealers' room were mostly last minute buyers The biggest sale days for me were Saturday and Sunday. People who were tire kicking finally decided to pull the trigger and buy that comic they had been eyeing. Most people thought that the exhibit hall was the dealer's room and never made it to the actual dealer's room. This accounted for a 1/3 drop in my sales. God willing, they will find someone to point out the mistakes of their show and find some people who have organization skills to pull off the kind of show that Dragon Con should be.

Everything had been going well with eBay and store sales until the terrorist attacks on September 11th. The week of those attacks our store sales dropped off as much as 60 percent during the weekdays and 25 percent on the weekends. At this time, we are going into the third week since the attacks, and the weekday sales are now off by 20 percent. The weekend sales are off by 25 percent. EBay sales have virtually come to a halt with a 15 percent success ratio. Yahoo! is having an 18 percent success ratio. This was going on with sales before and after the attacks. There are some signs of normalcy. We feel it's going to take another month or so for the eBay and Auctionworks community to be back to normal.

Show Sales: Amazing Spiderman #16 VG+ 4.5 $100, #4 & #5 VG 3.0 $185 for each one, #9 VG 4.0 $125; Fantastic Four #28 VF 8.0 $250; Sheena 3-D #1 (with glasses attached) FN- 5.5 $175; Silver Surfer #1 VG 4.0 $125, #4 FN- 5.5 $150; Tomb of Dracula #10 NM 9.5 $50, #13 NM 9.5 $30; Uncanny X-Men #100 (Variant) VF+ 8.5 $125, #95 FN 6.0 $350.

Store Sales: Amazing Spiderman #14 GD 2.0 $125, #15 GD+ 2.5 $55, #17 GD+ 2.5 $75, #39 VG/FN 5.0 $45; Silver Surfer #1 VG 4.0 $80; Uncanny X-Men #7 VG 4.0 $100.

eBay Sales: Justice League #1 VG + 4.5 $500; Snuffy Smith #1 & #2 both VF/NM 9.0 $10 each; Spectacular Peter Parker #1 VF/NM 9.0 $30; Uncanny X-Men #10 VG 4.0 $49.99.

Bob Storms

www.highgradecomics.com

I always wanted my first market report to be one of excitement and euphoria and before September 11th I would have probably written that. Working next to the World Trade Center at my day job and experiencing the event first hand quickly made me realize how things can quickly change in your life. Witnessing the destruction from the two planes, watching people leap to their deaths, escaping into a building before the dust cloud consumed the streets and watching people run for their

lives makes the running of a comic book business seem easy. I saw many heroes that day and have had many emotional ups and downs since. Newspapers and television have still not captured the level of destruction that hit the lower part of Manhattan that day. I have been back to the site, it still looks like a war zone.

The comic book business has quickly slowed but I should be faulted for not want.ng to return phone calls or emails. Many of my customers were very understanding that their orders would be delayed and I greatly appreciated tnat.

I would like to thank Scott Bloom for emailing me on September 11th and calling my brother because the phones were overloaded.

I'm sure the comic book business will slowly retum back to normal. Don't avoid traveling to shows because of paranoia. I don't think a comic book convention stands out as a National treasure or military target. Remember that our government will do the best they can but don't believe everything they say either.

Dan and Kim Fogel/ Jim Pitts

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Hello again from Hippy Comix, Inc! Welcome to the second installment of our Gemstone-exclusive Underground Comix Market Report and preview of our upcoming The Hippy Comix Underground Price Guide First Edition 1962-2002. As promised, this month's offering features the origins of Underground Comix (UGs) and their early publishing history, focusing on preeminent UG creator Robert Crumb and his revolutionary Zap Comix. We'll also sprinkle in a few tantalizing sales reports.

Some of the precursors of the UGs were humorous men's magazines, some digest-sized, that proliferated in the 1920s to 1950s and featured varying amounts of racy single-panel cartoons and jokes. Many comic book illustrators moonlighted in these mags at various points in their careers, including Carl Barks, Bill Ward, and Dan DeCarlo. Beginning in the 1930s, little pornographic parody comic booklets came on the scene, popularly known as Tijuana Bibles. These were created and published anonymously and featured famous cartoon characters, movie stars, and other celebrities in compromising situations. These were obviously bootleg and feverishly traded among sweaty-palmed schoolboys.

Perhaps the largest influence on the first generation of UG cartoonists was the EC Comics line, especially Harvey Kurtzman's MAD, beginning in 1952. After Kurtzman left EC, he created several short-lived humor mags, including two issues of Trump (1957), published by Hugh Hefner, and a self-published 11-issue run of Humbug, which began the same year. In 1960, Kurtzman began a 25-issue, five-year run of Help! (Warren), which included early work by UG pioneers Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton.

Other big influences were Paul Krassner's The Realist (beginning in 1958), a truly adult, anti-establishment illustrated humor magazine, as well as various college humor publications. Several cartoonists also self-published in a variety of formats in the early to mid-60s, including Vaughn Bode, Frank Stack, Jack Jackson, and Joel Beck. In 1966, a new style of psychedelic rock posters sprang up incorporating experimental designs and appropriating classic comics imagery. Leading artists of this genre, including Rick Griffin, Robert Williams, and Victor Moscoso, would later move on to UGs. These posters, as well as a new genre of underground newspapers, were distributed by a nationwide network of "head shops," which would later distribute UG comix and foreshadowed the comic book direct market.

Before contributing to Help!, Robert Crumb had been creating comic fanzines with his family since the mid-'50s. Bored with drawing greeting cards, and inspired by the psychedelic posters and lifestyle, he moved from Cleveland to San Francisco during the "Summer of Love" in 1967. He began contributing strips to underground papers such as The East Village Other, and Yarrowstalks. He decided to create his own comic book, but what he thought was the only copy of the artwork was stolen by a vanishing publisher. He drew a second comic, Zap Comix #1, which was published by Don Donahue and printed by Charles Plymell in February 1968. The original print run is estimated at 4000-5000 copies.

Zap #1 is the Action Comics #1 of the Underground, the single most influential comic and event rolled into one. Crumb and his wife Dana peddled the Plymell Zap #1s out of a baby stroller on Haight Street in San Francisco, and along with sales to head shops quickly sold out. The Plymell Zap #1s are identified by a twenty-five cent cover price and the words "Printed by Charles Plymell" on the back cover. Copies from this printing hardly ever hit the market. It is estimated that a VF+ to NM copy would probably fetch $1500 to $2000. The second printing (5000 copies) occurred between April and May of the same year, and is distinguished by a thirty-five cent cover price and the words "Printed by Don Donahue" on the back cover.

Later in 1968, Crumb's lost comic resurfaced and was published as Zap Comix #0, quickly followed by Zap Comix #2 wherein Griffin and Moscoso joined Crumb along with S. Clay Wilson, and Zap Comix #3 where they were joined by Gilbert Shelton. The following year, Robert Williams and Spain Rodriguez were the last additions to Zap with #4, until 19 years later, when Paul Mavrides became the new kid on the block with the latest issue, #14.

What is truly remarkable about Zap Comix is that it has remained creator-owned and run (more or less) democratically by the artists and been continuously in print, currently by Last Gasp. Consequently there have been dozens of printings of the earlier issues and several of the later ones. Distinguishing these has become an art form in itself and we recommend Jay Kennedy's 1982 Underground and Newave Comix Price Guide as a resource. Of course, a good rule of thumb is to watch the price steadily rise from thirty-five cents to $3.95 per copy.

Next month: The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers and Cherry lead the way from the 70s to the 90s!

Sales of Robert Crumb-related comics: Bijou Funnies #4 3rd print NM $15; Complete Crumb Comics Vol. 8 Hardcover, NM $40; Felch Cumics 2nd print NM $20; Funny Aminals (misspelling intentional, also 1st appearance Maus by Spiegelman) 1st print NM $25; Mr. Natural #2 1st print NM $20, 2nd print NM $6; People's Comix 1st print NM $20; Snatch Comics #1 3rd print NM, #2 6th print, #3

2nd print, all NM $15 each; XYZ Comics 1st print NM $20; Your Hytone Comix 1st print NM $25; Zap Comix #1 2nd print VF $200, 3rd print VF $14, current print NM $4; #0 5th print VF+ $5, 7th print NM $4; #2 2nd print VF+ $9, #3 1st print VF $44, #3 3rd print F $5, #4 1st print VF $24, 6th print VF+ $3, #5 1st print NM $16, 2nd print NM $6, #6 1st print VF+ $10, #7-10 1st print NM $12 each, #7 mini-comix version, only 500 printed NM $35, #11 1st print NM $10, #12-14 1st print NM $4 each.

Greg White

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Welcome to late summer in Central Florida. Hot, humid and lots of rain! Sales have been steady if not spectacular. Silver Age Marvel and DC still lead the way. The lower grade books sell well while the more expensive high-grade copies have a problem finding a home due to higher cost—most collectors simply cannot afford books in the $1000 and up range. As usual we have had to discount certain titles and groups of comics. I would estimate that we only receive full Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide 30%-40% of the time. As I have stated many times in the past the overall price structure still needs to lower in order to improve across the board sales. This silly 'slabbed' mentality within the comic book marketplace will only hurt the hobby.

Silver Age: Marvels in the good to fine range moved well this month. Amazing Spiderman, Fantastic Four, Journey into Mystery and Tales of Suspense sold well. We were also able to purchase a 1960s Marvel collection that included every super-hero book from late 1962 to 1969. A mid-grade group that will help to fill out our Marvel selection. DC books sell in spurts. One week Batman will move, the next week it will be another title. Overall DC sales are decent but a bit behind Marvel this month. Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey and other similar brands are slow as usual.

Silver Age Sales: Tales of Suspense #40 CG $200; Amazing Spider-Man #1 VG $900, #17 GD $40; Fantastic Four #2 GD $250; Batman #110 GD $25; Strange Tales #57 VG $30; Detective #230 GD $50.

Golden Age: Kind of quiet this month. We picked up a run of early Batman but that was about it. Most collectors cannot afford the better Golden Age comics. Demand was light this month. I am seeing more and more restored books from this period. We really need to address this issue with a price listing and general information in the next Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Not all books would be listed; let's start with key popular issues and go from there. The time has come.

Sales: Batman #44 GD $100, #62 GD $140; Prize #60 VG $22; Superman #11 FN $400; Action #18 GD $250; Four Color #16 FR $150.

Art, Toys & Disneyana: We bought a large vintage Disney collection this month. Lots of early Disneyland items and 1940s-1950s cartoon and movie pieces. These items have always had a good sales record for us—we should do well with this group. Demand continues for 1960s TV and comic character toys. We do not see as much of this material as we could use. We did get in the 1966 Aurora Batman model kit. I also get requests for original art but have had little offered to me in recent months.

Sales: Robin Aurora kit in box $150; Disneyland 1957 guidebook $30; Flintstones cel $100; Capt. Action doll loose $95.

That will wrap up our month. When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello. Have a great month!

Matt Nelson

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Another summer season is behind us, and while this year did not experience the explosion similar to 2000, most people had strong sales throughout this time. Investment grade CGC material is still trading hands for multiples of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, but, as predicted, buyers are now being more choosy because of the amount of material available for purchase. Now that the storm has passed, count on the high-grade stuff to dry up once again as people put the padlocks on their collections.

The non-CGC market (which still constitutes most of the hobby) is still going strong, assuming two things: you have an inventory of good material and your prices are down to earth. As said before, buyers have the opportunity to be more selective in their purchases, especially given the broader market the Internet has opened up. This is a good time to keep an eye on those prospects you've always considered undervalued. The hobby is restless, and once it has fed upon a trend long enough, it moves on.

CGC's population report is extremely valuable information, from an economical and historical standpoint. The information can be used to figure out which books are rare in high grade (and thus the better investment) and also to determine the highest existing copies of the more rare books. Of course it will take years for the census to build up enough for the numbers to truly mean anything, but if you check key issues from the mid '60s on up, particularly books like Iron Man #1, Hulk #181 and Spawn #1, the results are a real eye opener. Check it out.

Sales: More Fun #53 appVF+ (moderate work) $4000; Planet #1 GD $1000; Our Army at War #91 FN/VF $200; All-Star #8 FA- $1000; Detective #35 appVG (amateur) $800.

Scott McAdam

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Most of my sales have been on eBay or at shows in the last 14 months since I closed the doors to my retail store. I have never been happier. The vision I had created of being an "OLD TOY AND OLD COMIC BOOK STORE" back in 1994 was crashed when I needed to sell pogs, magic cards, Pokemon, action figures and many other things in order to "Pay The Rent." THANK GOD I NEVER SOLD BEANIE BABIES!

EBay has certainly changed the face of my business. I try to not have attachments to things like Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide value or retail value when selling toys and comics on "The Bay." I just go by

what I have paid for an item and make sure I am at least doubling my money after eBay fees. It has changed the way I buy comics and toys. The prices I am willing to pay are not what they used to be when I could count on things "SELLING." I have a large section at most shows that I sell for 50% off my marked price (which corresponds with condition Guide value or less about 95% of the time)."BUY IT NOW" seems to be the only time I get Guide or close to Guide for a comic any more. But as long as money is coming in to my business that is all that matters.

Unfortunately I have not found any more collections of nice high-grade stuff lately to fetch the big money prices of the CGC phenomenon. A few "BUY IT NOW" prices realized recently are a early 70s DC sealed 2-pack of Superboy #185 and Lois Lane #117 sold for $60 (about 1 1/2 times Guide); Star Trek #4 (Gold Key) FN $25 (1/2 Guide); Superboy Ann. #1 VG $90 (75%); McHale's Navy #1 VG $10; Vault of Horror #23 VG++ $65 (85%); Adventures into Terror # 9 VG++ $30 (85%); Suspense Detective #3 VG $54 (90%); Police #105 VG $35 (90%).

Here are a few bid prices: Sgt. Bilko's Private Doberman #1 GD+ $19.99 (50%); Our Army at War #86 Fair+ $9.99 (75%), #85 Fr to GD $21.51 (85%); Sea Hunt #9 VG-FN $17 (85%); Superman #128 GD $16.99 (60%); Fighting Indians of the Wild West (AVON) #1 VG $17.99 (55%); Headline #46 VG+ $8.99 (65%); Murderous Gangsters #2 GD+ $24.99 (70+%); Star Trek #2 Gold Key VG+ $19.99 (40%).

These are very recent and was hoping for them to sell on BUY IT NOW but they did not: Black Magic Vol 1 #1 VG++ $129.99 (65%); Black Magic V1 #3 VG $49 (60%); Weird Science #15 (#4) FN- $139.99 (70%).

The good thing about eBay and being an actual comic dealer is that you can make additional sales that don't cost you fees or much time. I turned a $90 BUY IT NOW into $1235 total with the phone call to give me a credit card. Overall I am sure that the vintage comic collecting field is strong for all aspects of its scope. Low-grade old comics (if they are hard to find or cheap) will sell. Good Golden Age super-hero, adventure, crime, horror, romance, humor, funny animal, etc., there is someone for almost any comic in any condition.

Thanks for reading and thanks for still loving this thing that we do. The end of August 2001 commemorated 26 years since that fateful Saturday afternoon at the flea market that I purchased ten comics for $1.50 (15 cents each) and walked into the indoor comic stand and sold one to the dealer for $1.50 (nine free comics). I was hooked! If you know where a reasonably priced first series Four Color #4 Donald Duck and a Super Goof #61 are available, let me know. This will give me a complete collection of every Walt Disney comic ever "SOLD" in America. Also looking for some rare but not expensive giveaways

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Proud to be an American! That is the sentiment of my customers in the wake of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, especially the new customers arriving for duty at the local National Guard camp!

Here is a sampling of what DC Comics the National Guard has been purchasing on their visit to Arkansas. Blackhawk #153 VG+ $8.50; World's Finest #125 VG+ $13, #130 VG+ $9, #133 GD $12, #160 VG $12; Batman #203 GD+ $11.

From Marvel: Avengers V1 #1 VG $245, #27 VG+ $8.25, #62 NF $8, Annual #1 VG+ $14, and Annual #2 VG+ $9; Marvel Team-Up #6 NM 14, #7 FN+ $9; Strange Tales #147 FN $8, #165 FN $8.50; Thor #158 VG+ $17; X-Men #44 FN $22.

The large collection of Spider-Man issues that I purchased is still moving slowly. Nearly all these sold to the same person who has been picking up one or two books a week since the collection first arrived: Amazing Spider-Man #8 FN $48, #41 (1st Rhino) VG $20, #42 (3rd Mary Jane, 1st time face shown) VG+ $22, #74 FN $12, #77 FN $9, #121 (Death of Gwen Stacy) FN $60.

Jamie Newbold/ Gino Siraguse

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As I (Jamie) write this, two months have passed since the catastrophes in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. I feel pain for the law enforcement officers, fire personnel and emergency service workers killed or wounded in the attack. I am a retired police officer and still enjoy solidarity with those civil service workers. I'm using this forum to air my heartfelt thanks for all those cops, fire fighters and EMT workers still on the job. Our store supports you!

For what it's worth, comic books provided me with one avenue of escape from the turmoil of my job. They provide me with entertainment and fleeting escapism now. Comics provide a focal point for the embodiment of heroism and success under pressure. The good guys and the good countries come out on top.

The stories that were told in the past, those propaganda covers of World War II, and subsequent Korean conflict, rallied all kinds of readers around our country's patriotism. Those classic anti-Nazi covers of the 1940s from the good folks at Timely must have been inspiring to impressionable kids and reassuring to worried soldiers heading off to combat. We believe that comics played a minor role in the positive mindset of Americans that read them. Looking back, it seems to many of us comic book guys that WWII-era comic books helped win the war! They filled a need and the sheer volume of purchases made back then prove it. And it's happening again!

Comics have an opportunity to support our country in yet another time of need. Comics that provide positive messages, or are just entertaining, are still there for us to read. Unfortunately, when times are tough, frivolous purchases—collectibles—take a hard hit. Comics sales, a hobby that seems to be irrelevant to many, are going to suffer if continuing events frighten buyers into a siege mentality with their cash. I'd like to avoid that if possible. We all would. Continuing to support the comics industry, the publishers, the retailers and the collectors should be a thought in the back of the mind of every comic book enthusiast. Keeping our business strong, like all other U.S. businesses, should continue to be an ongoing enterprise.

Golden Age: Adventure #82 FA/GD $100; Air-Fighters V2/2 FA+ $60; All-Flash #15 VG $148; Batman #92 GD $62; Comic Cavalcade #11 FA $45; Crime and Punishment #1 VF/NM $250; Mary Marvel #7 VG $66; More Fun #95 FA/GD $75; Sensation Comics #55 FN $118, #72 VG $80; Strange Adventures #10 GD $70; Tales From The Crypt #44 FN- $95; Two-Fisted Tales #40 FN $33; Whiz #23 VG/F $150; Wonder Woman #49 VG+ $95.

Silver Age: Amazing Spiderman #50 FN $123, #97 NM $85; Avengers #8 VG $36, #17 FN $25.50; Fantastic Four #4 VG/F (signed by Lee/Kirby) $600; Savage Tales #1 FN/VF $70; Space Adventures #18 GD/VG $29; Strange Tales #101 FN+ $230, #102 VF+ $275.

Joseph Serpico

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As other markets and areas of investment start to look more attractive (i.e., stocks in particular), one should probably be focusing, more than ever, on the prime items our hobby has to offer, since the return on investment for comics may have a difficult time matching these other instruments in the short to midterm.

I believe the market for real estate and comics (most ordinary pieces) may have peaked for this round of increases, but the best material a forum has to offer will always be in demand and escalate, regardless of the short-term economical outlook. How the current financial climate will influence sales in comics and collectibles in general, is debatable, although it seems that consumer spending across the board is going to be lighter then we have seen for a while.

Surely, (with many forecasting a imminent recession) there will probably be some trickle effect concerning collectible sales at the same time. As money tightens up, those with money to spend on either their hobby, or as investments, will be more discerning. They will be looking for the better quality items, as there will be fewer dollars to go around on casual or impulse purchases. Many co lectors may even put their collecting pursuits on hold for a time. They may be placing their money in other areas of investing, or may be uncertain, or less confident in the short-term economic future and in their ability to generate income.

The good news is that the American economy is fundamentally sound and strong. However long or hard a recession might be, a downturn looks to be of the short-term variety, and not too deep. Any slippage of collectible sales while probably be temporary, and it is very likely that a rebound will be vigorous and sustained. If demand weakens, there may be some bargains to be had in the coming months. The bargains may become deeper as Christmas approaches. As usual, however, the better stuff will hold its price.

CGC graded comics in high grade are still very much in demand. I have noticed though, that since the population report became available the lesser grade books have dropped in value. The top graded books have increased in demand and price, somewhat predictably. As of this writing, CGC books are still easier to sell then naked books. I have observed that eBay traffic slowed down considerably during the week of the disaster, and increased to levels of about 80% after that.

The prices bid have also decreased for most common material (even CGC books) on my eBay auction sales. I have seen an increased demand for comics from the mid to late 70s, and the early 80s...more so for esoteric and uncommon books. Keys in high grade, and pedigrees are still on fire, and who knows when this trend may subside. Original art, particularly the choice pieces, are still probably undervalued...as hard as that may be to comprehend! Prices for some of these have more then tripled in the past few years. This may be, for investment purposes, the best area to dwell in!

All of the following books are slabbed and graded by CGC: Action #399 NM- $31, #424 NM $43; Adventure #166 VF+ $510, #315 VF $61, #365 NM- $80; Amazing Spider-Man $41 NM- $355, #99 NM- $95, #130 NM+ $113, #174 VF+ $28; Avengers #127 NM+ $42; Hero for Hire #31 VF+ $47; Strange Adventures #17 FN- $89; Thor #171 NM- $38; Vault of Horror #19 FN+ $117.

Ted Van Lieu

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It's been a wild couple of months. We all know about the terrible events of September 11th, and are impressed with the response of all the great people in this country who are lending a hand. For about two weeks after that, people had adopted a sort of 'bunker' mentality, and were just sitting tight. There wasn't a whole lot of activity. Since then, things have been gradually picking up, and this past week comic collectors exhaled and were doing fairly brisk buying again.

Silver Age in higher grades lead the way, as usual, with Marvels being in higher demand, even though the DCs are significantly harder to find. I think part of the reason is that the best and most desirable DCs are so hard to locate in decent grades that collectors just don't try as hard. A lot of collectors have in the back of their mind "will it get a good CGC grade?" and shy away from average grade books, which is about the best you'll find for early Silver DCs. Of course, Marvel emerged as a powerhouse in the 60s, and most of us are still thrilled by the excitement generated then, and even the very look of the books.

Recent sales: Amazing Spidey #5 VF+ $1150, #11 VF $325; Iron Man #55 NM/NM- $150; Superman #227 NM- $50, #239 NM $55; Fantastic Four #5 VG/F $550; X-Men #3 VF+ $450, 80-Page Giant #15 VF $75; Showcase #73 CGC NM- 9.2 $171.50.

Seventies books continue to be very popular, with keys leading the way, whether Marvel or DC. Collectors are fussier about getting pretty much only higher grades in this group because they are still available. Twenty-centers are extremely popular, as they're still cheap, and fondly remembered. Of course, it's only a matter of time before the 25-cent and 30-cent issues take off! It's encouraging to see books from other companies gaining popularity too. For example, we've had requests for various Charlton books, such as Six Million Dollar Man, various horror and mystery titles and others, and Archie titles such as Sabrina.

Golden Age books are always going to be popular with the more advanced collectors. Timelys are mega popular and in short supply, especially the best loved titles. DCs are terrific too, and we've seen an upsurge in requests for lesser-known titles, such as Real Fact, Real Screen, Leading, Danger Trail, and several others. They are much harder to locate than the major titles. Of course, you can't go wrong with Batman, Superman, and the rest of the gang. Heck, if we could even come up with any More Funs, they d sell in an instant!

Sales: Capt. America #45, Human Torch #21 VF+, Action #81 VG+, #38 VG, Batman #17 G/VG, Superman # 24 VG-, severa Militarys, Moderns, Police, and Plastic Man,

Jumbo #161 VF+, #162 VF/NM, #163 NM-, lots of Wings, Zip Comics #5 GD/VG, #14 VG, #35 VG-, zillions of others.

There's been great interest in books from other companies too. Quality books are always good, because the art is so good in most of them, and the characters are good. Military, Modern, Police, Plastic Man, and others are the mainstays. Better Nedors are great, but in very short supply. Fawcetts are sort of hit and miss, depending on which titles and numbers. Kind of a shame, since they're really good books. There are zillions of other companies that produced books during the 40s and 50s, and many of their books are terrific, or at least have great covers, and are bargains. Go ahead and look for scarce material from this era that is relatively inexpensive. Pre-Code horror and mystery has leveled off. It was white hot for a while, but now is just normal. There are still many collectors, and books are selling pretty well, but not like the frenzy of a couple years ago. The key books and real nasty covers still fly, while the others go mostly to completists.

Sales: This Mag is Haunted #1 GD+ $67, #2 VF+ Store Stamp C $175; Weird Horrors #3 F $59, #5 F $50.

Atomic Age Sci-Fi is extremely popular. There are so many cool books, cool covers, and cool artists at work in these. They are such a time capsule to the mood of the era, and the imaginativeness of the stories and art is very engaging. War books are very popular, especially the DC Big 5 titles. GI Combat seems to be the most popular, followed by OAAW. Atlas War books are gaining in popularity, as collectors realize that they are pretty scarce and cheap, and there is a lot of good stories and art in them.

Sales: OAAW #1 VG/FN $500, #2 GD $52; zillions of GI Combats, Star Spangled War #22 VF $95.

Westerns come and go at an unpredictable rate; it's hit or miss with collectors. This is generally not a category where you'll find speculators.

Sales: Western Thrillers (Fox) #2, 3, 5 VG $110; Durango Kid #5 FN $70.

There you go. In any event, in the coming months, be vigilant, and my best wishes to you all!

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

ARTWORK © 2001 WILLIAM M. GAINES, AGENT

[continued from page 19]

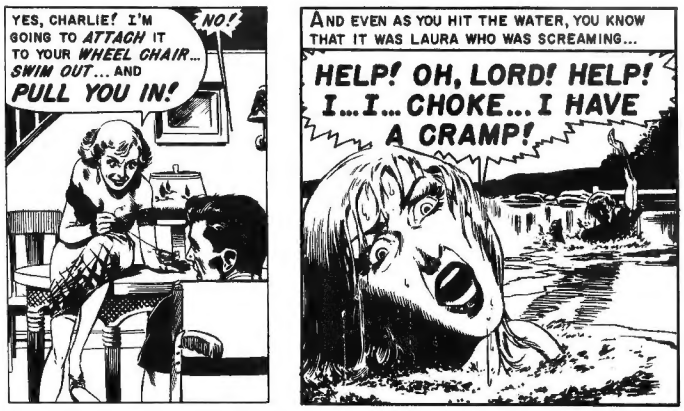
Marie Severin told me, "His name is not well-known today, as he was not in the super-hero/fantasy realm. I would love to see what he would have done with a Batman story." Yes, so would a lot of us. But George said he never cared for what he called "long-drawers idiot crap. I was offered a better page rate to do some super-hero stuff and turned it down."

However, most of his steady work for the rest of his career was in newspaper strips, where he ghosted *Terry and the Pirates* for a long time. His fans can but wonder how good the strip could have been had he not been forced to shoehorn his many talents into the restrictive medium, and in the style of other artists. After that, though, he followed Al Williamson on *Secret Agent Corrigan*, which he drew for a good two decades. He said, "When I got to write and draw *Secret Agent Corrigan*, though I did some scary stories, I kept the entire run 'upbeat' and Corrigan's morals impeccable, as a decent, incorruptible man. I even had him throw his badge into the face of the FBI Chief when the actual FBI helped to burn the Davidians to death in Waco, with a little speech about duty as he saw it." If you've been paying attention, you know that sounds like exactly the sort of thing George would've done, doesn't it?

Marie Severin says, "A few years ago, Al Williamson kidnapped him to appear at a comics convention in Ramapo, New York. He was drawing great sketches and giving them away, when one of the guys told him to charge. Within two hours, he had stuffed bills in his shirt pockets, pants, and some fell on the floor! He had no idea that the fans were fascinated with his work."

In his last letter to me, just a few short months ago, George said, "For all the tons of stuff I produced over the decades, I seem to rate as an 'also-ran.'" No, George. To those who knew you, you were a great and kind man. And to anyone who encounters your work in the decades to come, you will remain a giant.

[The author would like to thank all those quoted in this piece for their memories of George Evans. I'd also like to express special thanks to David Burlington, Grant Geissman, Roger Hill, Al Feldstein and Jack Kamen for information and general encouragement.]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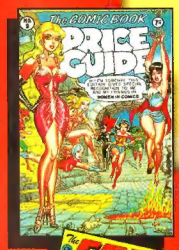

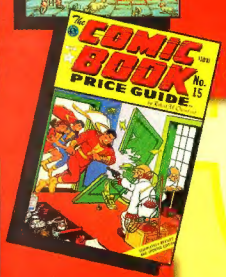

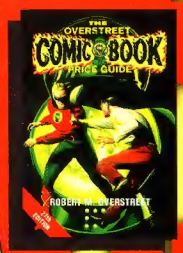

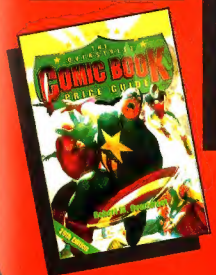

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